Martin Luther

The Babylonian Captivity of the Church
A prelude 1520
Jesus

INDULGENCES
THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR
THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM
THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE
CONFIRMATION
MARRIAGE
ORDINATION
THE SACRAMENT OF EXTREME UNCTION

Martin Luther, Augustinian, to his friend, Herman Tulich,

Greeting
1.1 Like it or not, I am compelled to learn more every day, with so many and such able masters vying with one another to improve my mind. Some two years ago I wrote a little book on indulgences, which I now deeply regret having published. For at the time I still clung to the Roman tyranny with great superstition and held that indulgences should not be altogether rejected, seeing they were approved by the common consent of men. Nor was this to be wondered at, for I was then engaged single-handed in my Sisyphean task. Since then, however, through the kindness of Sylvester and the friars, who so strenuously defended indulgences, I have come to see that they are nothing but an fraud of the Roman flaterers by which they rob people of their faith and fortunes. I wish I could convince the booksellers and all my readers to burn up the whole of my writings on indulgences and to substitute for them this proposition:

INDULGENCES

are a Swindler's Trick of the Roman flaterers.

1.3 Next, Eck and Emser, with their fellows, undertook to instruct me concerning the primacy of the pope. Here too, not to be ungrateful to such learned folk, I acknowledge how greatly I have profited by their labors. For, while denying the divine authority of the papacy, I still admitted its human authority. But after hearing and reading the subtle subtleties of these pretentious and conceited men, with which they skilfully prop their idol – for in these matters my mind is not altogether unreachable – I now know of a certainty that the papacy is the kingdom of Babylon and the power of Nimrod the mighty hunter. Once more, therefore, that all may fall out to my friends' advantage, I beg both booksellers and readers to burn what I have published on that subject and to hold to this proposition:

1.4 THE PAPACY IS THE MIGHTY prey of the Roman Bishop.
This follows from the arguments of Eck, Emser and the Leipzig lecturer on the Holy Scriptures.

1.5 Now they send me back to school again to teach me about communion in both kinds and other weighty subjects. And I must begin to study with all my strength, so as not to hear my teachers without profit. A certain Italian friar of Cremona has written a Revocation of Martin Luther to the Holy See – that is, a revocation in which I do not revoke anything (as the words declare) but he revokes me. That is the kind of Latin the Italians are now beginning to write. Another friar, a German of Leipzig, that same lecturer, you know, on the whole canon of the Scriptures, has written a book against me concerning the sacrament in both kinds, and is planning, I understand, still greater and more marvelous things. The Italian was canny enough not to set down his name, fearing perhaps the fate of Cajetan and Sylvester. But the Leipzig man, as becomes a fierce and valiant German, boasts on his ample title page of his name, his career, his saintliness, his scholarship, his office, glory, honour, yes, almost of his very shoes. Doubtless I shall gain here a lot of information, since indeed his dedicatory epistle is addressed to the Son of God Himself. On so familiar a footing are these saints with Christ Who reigns in heaven! Moreover, I think I hear three magpies chattering in this book: the first in good Latin, the second in better Greek, the third in purest Hebrew. What do you think, my Herman, what is there for me to do but to prick up my ears? The thing emanates from Leipzig, from the Order of the Observance of the Holy Cross.

1.6 Fool that I was, I used to think it would be good if a general council decided that the sacrament be administered to the laity in both kinds. The more than learned friar wants to correct my opinion, and declares that neither Christ nor the apostles commanded or commended the administration of both kinds to the laity. It was, therefore, left to the judgment of the Church what to do or not to do in this matter, and the Church must be obeyed. These are his words.

1.7 You will perhaps ask, what madness has entered into the man, or against whom he is writing, since I have not condemned the use of one kind, but have left the decision about the use of both kinds to the judgment of the Church – the very thing he attempts to assert and which he turns against me. My answer is, that this sort of argument is common to all those who write against Luther. They assert the very things they assail, or they set up a man of straw whom they may attack. Thus Sylvester, Eck and Emser! Thus the theologians of Cologne and Louvain! If this friar had not been of the same type, he would never have written against Luther.

1.8 Yet in one respect this man luckier than his fellows. For in undertaking to prove that the use of both kinds is neither commanded nor commended, but left to the will of the Church, he brings forward passages of Scripture to prove that by the command of Christ one kind only was appointed for the laity. So that it is true, according to this new interpreter of the Scriptures, that one kind was not commanded, and at the same time was commanded by Christ! This novel sort of argument is, as you know, the particular forte of the Leipzig dialecticians. Did not Emser in his earlier book profess to write of me in a friendly spirit, and then, after I had convicted him of filthy envy and foul lying, did he not openly acknowledge in his later book, written to refute my arguments, that he had written in both a friendly and an unfriendly spirit? A sweet fellow, certainly, as you know.

1.9 But listen to our distinguished distinguisher of "kinds," for whom the will of the Church and a command of Christ, and a command of Christ and no command of Christ, are all one and the same! How ingeniously he proves that only one kind is to be given to the laity, by the command of Christ, that is, by the will of the Church. He puts it in capital letters, thus: THE INFALLIBLE FOUNDATION. Thereupon he treats John 6 with incredible wisdom, in which passage Christ speaks of the bread from heaven and the bread of life, which is He Himself. The learned fellow not only refers these words to the Sacrament of the Altar, but because Christ says: " I am the living bread" and not, "I am the living cup" he actually concludes that we have in this passage the institution of the sacrament in only one kind for the laity. But here follow the words: " For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed," and, " Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood." When it dawned upon the good friar that these words speak undeniably for both kinds and against one kind – Poof! – how happily and learnedly he slips out of the quandary by asserting that in these words Christ means to say only that whoever receives the one kind receives under it both flesh and blood. This he puts for the "infallible foundation" of a structure well worthy of the holy and heavenly Observance.

1.10 Now, I beg you, learn with me from this passage that Christ, in John 6, enjoins the sacrament in one kind, yet in such a way that His commanding it means leaving it to the will of the Church. Further, that Christ is speaking in this chapter only of the laity and not of the priests. For to the latter the living bread from heaven does not pertain, but presumably the deadly bread from hell! And how is it with the deacons and subdeacons, who are neither laymen nor priests? According to this brilliant writer, they ought to use neither the one kind nor both kinds! You see, dear Tulich, this novel and observant method of treating Scripture.

1.11 But learn this, too – that Christ is speaking in John 6 of the Sacrament of the Altar – although He Himself teaches that His words refer to faith in the Word made flesh, for He says, "This is the work of God that you believe on him whom he has sent." But our Leipzig professor of the Scriptures must be permitted to prove anything he pleases from any Scripture passage whatsoever. For he is an Anaxagorian, or rather an Aristotelian theologian, for whom nouns and verbs, interchanged, mean the same thing and any thing. So aptly does he cite Scripture proof-texts throughout the whole of his book, that if he set out to prove the presence of Christ in the sacrament, he would not hesitate to commence thus: "Here begins the book of the Revelation of St. John the Divine." All his quotations are as apt as this one would be, and the "wise man" imagines he is adorning his drivel with the multitude of his quotations.

1.12 The rest I pass over, lest you should smother in the filth of this vile toilet. In conclusion, he brings forward: 1 Corinthians 11:23, where Paul says he received from the Lord, and delivered to the Corinthians, the use of both the bread and the cup. Here again our distinguisher of kinds, treating the Scriptures with his usual brilliance, teaches that Paul did not deliver, but permitted both kinds. Do you ask where he gets his proof? Out of his own head, as he did in the case of John 6: For it does not behoove this lecturer to give a reason for his assertions. He belongs to the order of those who teach and prove all things by their visions. Accordingly we are here taught that the Apostle, in this passage, addressed not the whole Corinthian congregation, but the laity alone – but then he "permitted" nothing at all to the clergy, and they are deprived of the sacrament altogether! – and further, that, according to a new kind of grammar, "I have received from the Lord" means "It is permitted by the Lord," and "I have delivered it to you" means "I have permitted it to you." I beg you, mark this well. For by this method, not only the Church, but every passing swindler will be at liberty, according to this master, to turn all the commands, institutions and ordinances of Christ and the apostles into a mere "permission."

1.13 I perceive, therefore, that this man is driven by an angel of Satan, and that he and his partners seek but to make a name for themselves through me, as men who were worthy to cross swords with Luther. But their hopes shall be dashed. I shall ignore them and not mention their names from now on – not ever. This one reply shall suffice me for all their books. If they be worthy of it, I pray Christ in His mercy to bring them to a sound mind. If not, I pray that they may never leave off writing such books and that the enemies of the truth may never deserve to read any other. It is a popular and true saying:

1.14 This I know is true – whenever I fought with filth, whether I was a Victor or was vanquished, I came away from the fight defiled.

1.15 And, since I perceive that they have an abundance of leisure and of writing paper, I shall see to it that they may have ample opportunity for writing. I shall run on before, and while they are celebrating a glorious victory over one of my so-called heresies, I shall be meanwhile devising a new one. For I too am desirous that these gallant leaders in battle should win to themselves many titles and decorations. Therefore, while they complain that I laud communion in both kinds, and are happily engrossed in this most important and worthy matter, I will go yet one step farther and undertake to show that all those who deny communion in both kinds to the laity are wicked men. And the more conveniently to do this, I will compose a prelude on the captivity of the Roman Church. In due time I shall have a great deal more to say, when the learned papists have disposed of this book.

1.16 I take this course, lest any pious reader who may chance upon this book, should be offended at my dealing with such filthy matters, and should justly complain of finding in it nothing to cultivate and instruct his mind or even to furnish food for learned thought. For you know how impatient my friends are because I waste my time on the sordid fictions of these men, which, they say, are amply refuted in the reading. They look for greater things from me, which Satan seeks in this way to hinder. I have at length resolved to follow their counsel and to leave to those hornets the pleasant business of wrangling and hurling violent accusations.

1.17 Of that friar of Cremona I will say nothing. He is an unlearned man and a simpleton, who attempts with a few rhetorical passages to recall me to the Holy See, from which I am not as yet aware of having departed, nor has any one proved it to me. He is chiefly concerned in those silly passages with showing that I ought to be moved by the vow of my order and by the fact that the empire has been transferred to us Germans. He seems thus to have set out to write, not my "revocation," but rather the praises of the French people and the Roman Pontiff. Let him attest his loyalty in his little book. It is the best he could do. He does not deserve to be harshly treated, for I think he was not prompted by malice. Nor should he be learnedly refuted, for all his chatter is sheer ignorance and simplicity.

1.18 AT THE OUTSET I must deny that there are seven sacraments, and hold for the present to but three – baptism, penance and the bread. These three have been subjected to a miserable captivity by the Roman curia, and the Church has been deprived of all her liberty. To be sure, if I desired to use the term in its scriptural sense, I should allow but a single sacrament, with three sacramental signs. But of this I shall treat more fully at the proper time.

The Sacrament of the Altar

2.1 Now, about the Sacrament of the Bread, the most important of all sacraments:

2.2 Let me tell you what progress I have made in my studies on the administration of this sacrament. For when I published my treatise on the Eucharist, I clung to the common usage, being in no way concerned with the question whether the papacy was right or wrong. But now, challenged and attacked, no, forcibly thrust into the arena, I shall freely speak my mind, let all the papists laugh or weep together.

2.3 IN THE FIRST PLACE, John 6 is to be entirely excluded from this discussion, since it does not refer in a single syllable to the sacrament. For not only was the sacrament not yet instituted, but the whole context plainly shows that Christ is speaking of faith in the Word made flesh, as I have said above. For He says, " My words are spirit, and they are life," which shows that He is speaking of a spiritual eating, whereby whoever eats has life, while the Jews understood Him to be speaking of bodily eating and therefore disputed with Him. But no eating can give life save the eating which is by faith, for that is the truly spiritual and living eating. As Augustine also says: "Why make ready teeth and stomach? Believe, and you have eaten." For the sacramental eating does not give life, since many eat unworthily. Therefore, He cannot be understood as speaking of the sacrament in this passage.

2.4 These words have indeed been wrongly applied to the sacrament, as in the decretal Dudum and often elsewhere. But it is one thing to misapply the Scriptures, it is quite another to understand them in their proper meaning. But if Christ in this passage enjoined the sacramental eating, then by saying, " Except you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you," He would condemn all infants, invalids and those absent or in any way hindered from the sacramental eating, however strong their faith might be. Thus Augustine, in the second book of his Contra Julianum, proves from Innocent that even infants eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, without the sacrament, that is, they partake of them through the faith of the Church. Let this then be accepted as proved – John 6 does not belong here. For this reason I have elsewhere written that the Bohemians have no right to rely on this passage in support of their use of the sacrament in both kinds.

2.5 Now there are two passages that do clearly bear upon this matter – the Gospel narratives of the institution of the Lord's Supper, and Paul in 1 Corinthians 11. Let us examine these. Matthew, Mark and Luke agree that Christ gave the whole sacrament to all the disciples, and it is certain that Paul delivered both kinds. No one has ever had the temerity to assert the contrary. Further, Matthew reports that Christ did not say of the bread, "All of you, eat of it," but of the cup, " Drink of it all of you." Mark likewise does not say, "They all ate from it," but, " They all drank from it."

Both Matthew and Mark attach the note of universality to the cup, not to the bread, as though the Spirit saw this schism coming, by which some would be forbidden to partake of the cup, which Christ desired should be common to all. How furiously, do you think, would they rave against us, if they had found the word "all" attached to the bread instead of the cup! They would not leave us a loophole to escape, they would cry out against us and set us down as heretics, they would damn us for schismatics. But now, since it stands on our side and against them, they will not be bound by any force of logic – these men of the most free will, who change and change again even the things that are God's, and throw everything into confusion.

2.6 But imagine me standing over against them and interrogating my lords the papists. In the Lord's Supper, I say, the whole sacrament, or communion in both kinds, is given only to the priests or else it is given also to the laity. If it is given only to the priests, as they would have it, then it is not right to give it to the laity in either kind. It must not be rashly given to any to whom Christ did not give it when He instituted it. For if we permit one institution of Christ to be changed, we make all of His laws invalid, and every one will boldly claim that he is not bound by any law or institution of His. For a single exception, especially in the Scriptures, invalidates the whole. But if it is given also to the laity, then it inevitably follows that it ought not to be withheld from them in either form. And if any do withhold it from them when they desire it, they act impiously and contrary to the work, example and institution of Christ.

2.7 I confess that I am conquered by this, to me, unanswerable argument, and that I have neither read nor heard nor found anything to advance against it. For here the word and example of Christ stand firm, when He says, not by way of permission but of command, "All of you, drink from it." For if all are to drink, and the words cannot be understood as addressed to the priests alone, then it is certainly an impious act to withhold the cup from laymen who desire it, even though an angel from heaven were to do it. For when they say that the distribution of both kinds was left to the judgment of the Church, they make this assertion without giving any reason for it and put it forth without any authority. It is ignored just as readily as it is proved, and does not stand up against an opponent who confronts us with the word and work of Christ. such a one must be refuted with a word of Christ, but this we do not possess.

2.8 But if one kind may be withheld from the laity, then with equal right and reason a portion of baptism and penance might also be taken from them by this same authority of the Church. Therefore, just as baptism and absolution must be administered in their entirety, so the Sacrament of the Bread must be given in its entirety to all laymen, if they desire it. I am amazed to find them asserting that the priests may never receive only the one kind, in the mass, on pain of committing a mortal sin – that for no other reason, as they unanimously say, than that both kinds constitute the one complete sacrament, which may not be divided. I beg them to tell me why it may be divided in the case of the laity, and why to them alone the whole sacrament may not be given. Do they not acknowledge, by their own testimony, either that both kinds are to be given to the laity, or that it is not a valid sacrament when only one kind is given to them? How can the one kind be a complete sacrament for the laity and not a complete sacrament for the priests? Why do they flaunt the authority of the Church and the power of the pope in my face? These do not make void the Word of God and the testimony of the truth.

2.9 But further, if the Church can withhold the wine from the laity, it can also withhold the bread from them. It could, therefore, withhold the entire Sacrament of the Altar from the laity and completely annul Christ's institution so far as they are concerned. I ask, by what authority? But if the Church cannot withhold the bread, or both kinds, neither can it withhold the wine. This cannot possibly be contradicted. For the Church's power must be the same over either kind as over both kinds, and if she has no power over both kinds, she has none over either kind. I am curious to hear what the Roman flaterers will have to say to this.

2.10 What carries most weight with me, however, and quite decides the matter for me is this. Christ says: "This is my blood, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins." Here we see very plainly that the blood is given to all those for whose sins it was shed. But who will dare to say it was not shed for the laity? Do you not see whom He addresses when He gives the cup? Doesn't He give it to all? Doesn't He say that it is shed for all? "For you," He says – Well, we will let these be the priests– "and for many" – these cannot be priests. Yet He says, "All of you, drink of it." I too could easily trifle here and with my words make a mockery of Christ's words, as my dear trifler does. But they who rely on the Scriptures in opposing us, must be refuted by the Scriptures.

2.11 This is what has prevented me from condemning the Bohemians, who, whether they are wicked men or good, certainly have the word and act of Christ on their side, while we have neither, but only that hollow device of men – "the Church has appointed it." It was not the Church that appointed these things, but the tyrants of the churches, without the consent of the Church, which is the people of God.

2.12 But where in all the world is the necessity, where the religious duty, where the practical use, of denying both kinds, i.e., the visible sign, to the laity, when every one concedes to them the grace of the sacrament without the sign? If they concede the grace, which is the greater, why not the sign, which is the lesser? For in every sacrament the sign as such is of far less importance than the thing signified. What then is to prevent them from conceding the lesser, when they concede the greater? I can see but one reason. It has come about by the permission of an angry God in order to give occasion for a schism in the Church. It is to bring home to us how, having long ago lost the grace of the sacrament, we contend for the sign, which is the lesser, against that which is the most important and the chief thing, just as some men for the sake of ceremonies contend against love. No, this monstrous perversion seems to date from the time when we began for the sake of the riches of this world to rage against Christian love. Thus God would show us, by this terrible sign, how we esteem signs more than the things they signify. How preposterous would it be to admit that the faith of baptism is granted the candidate for baptism, and yet to deny him the sign of this faith, namely, the water!

2.13 Finally, Paul stands invincible and stops every mouth, when he says in 1 Corinthians 11, "I have received from the Lord what I also delivered to you." He does not say, "I permitted to you," as that friar lyingly asserts. Nor is it true that Paul delivered both kinds on account of the contention in the Corinthian congregation. For, first, the text shows that their contention was not about both kinds, but about the contempt and envy among rich and poor, as it is clearly stated: "One is hungry, and another is drunken, and you put to shame those that have nothing." Again, Paul is not speaking of the time when he first delivered the sacrament to them, for he does not say, "I receive from the Lord and give to you," but, " I received and delivered" – namely, when he first began to preach among them, a long while before this contention. This shows that he delivered both kinds to them. "Delivered" means the same as "commanded," for elsewhere he uses the word in this sense. Consequently there is nothing in the friar's fuming about permission. It is an assortment of arguments without Scripture, reason or sense. His opponents do not ask what he has dreamed, but what the Scriptures decree in this matter. Out of the Scriptures he cannot adduce one dot of an I or cross of a T in support of his dreams, while they can bring forward mighty thunderbolts in support of their faith.

2.14 Come here then, popish flatterers, one and all! Fall in line and defend yourselves against the charge of godlessness, tyranny, treason against the Gospel, and the crime of slandering your brethren. You decry as heretics those who will not be wise after the vaporings of your own brains, in the face of such patent and potent words of Scripture. If any are to be called heretics and schismatics, it is not the Bohemians nor the Greeks, for they take their stand upon the Gospel. But you Romans are the heretics and godless schismatics, for you presume upon your own fictions and fly in the face of the clear Scriptures of God. Parry that stroke, if you can!

2.15 But what could be more ridiculous, and more worthy of this friar's brain, than his saying that the Apostle wrote these words and gave this permission, not to the Church universal, but to a particular church, that is, the Corinthian? Where does he get his proof? Out of his one storehouse, his own impious head. If the Church universal receives, reads and follows this epistle in all points as written for itself, why should it not do the same with this portion of it? If we admit that any epistle, or any part of any epistle, of Paul does not apply to the Church universal, then the whole authority of Paul falls to the ground. Then the Corinthians will say that what he teaches about faith in the epistle to the Romans does not apply to them. What greater blasphemy and madness can be imagined than this! God forbid that there should be one dot of an I or cross of a T in all of Paul which the whole Church universal is not bound to follow and keep! Not so did the Fathers hold, down to these perilous times, in which Paul foretold there should be blasphemers and blind and foolish men, of whom this friar is one, no, the chief of them.

2.16 However, suppose we grant the truth of this intolerable madness. If Paul gave his permission to a particular church, then, even from your own point of view, the Greeks and Bohemians are in the right, for they are particular churches. Hence it is sufficient that they do not act contrary to Paul, who at least gave permission. Moreover, Paul could not permit anything contrary to Christ's institution. Therefore I throw in your face, O Rome, and in the face of all you flaterers, these sayings of Christ and Paul, on behalf of the Greeks and the Bohemians. You cannot prove that you have received any authority to change them, much less to accuse others of heresy for disregarding your arrogance. Rather you deserve to be charged with the crime of godlessness and despotism.

2.17 Furthermore, Cyprian, who alone is strong enough to hold all the Romanists at bay, bears witness, in the fifth book of his treatise On the Lapsed, that it was a wide-spread custom in his church to administer both kinds to the laity, and even to children, yes, to give the body of the Lord into their hands, of which he cites many instances. He condemns, for example, certain members of the congregation as follows: "The sacrilegious man is angered at the priests because he does not receive the body of the Lord right away with unclean hands, or drink the blood of the Lord with defiled lips." He is speaking, as you see, of laymen, and irreverent laymen, who desired to receive the body and the blood from the priests. Do you find anything to snarl at here, wretched flatterer? Say that even this holy martyr, a Church Father preeminent for his apostolic spirit, was a heretic and used that permission in a particular church.

2.18 In the same place, Cyprian narrates an incident that came under his own observation. He describes at length how a deacon was administering the cup to a little girl, who drew away from him, whereupon he poured the blood of the Lord into her mouth. We read the same of St. Donatus, whose broken chalice this wretched flatterer so lightly disposes of. "I read of a broken chalice," he says, "but I do not read that the blood was given." It is no wonder! He who finds what he pleases in the Scriptures will also read what he pleases in histories. But will the authority of the Church be established, or will heretics be refuted, in this way?

2.19 Enough of this! I did not undertake this work to reply to him who is not worth replying to, but to bring the truth of the matter to light.

2.20 I conclude, then, that it is wicked and despotic to deny both kinds to the laity, and that this is not in the power of any angel, much less of any pope or council. Nor does the Council of Constance give me pause, for if its authority carries weight, why does not that of the Council of Basel also carry weight? For the latter council decided, on the contrary, after much disputing, that the Bohemians might use both kinds, as the extant records and documents of the council prove. And to that council this ignorant flatterer refers in support of his dream. In such wisdom does his whole treatise abound.

2.21 The first captivity of this sacrament, therefore, concerns its substance or completeness, of which we have been deprived by the despotism of Rome. Not that they sin against Christ, who use the one kind, for Christ did not command the use of either kind, but left it to every one's free will, when He said: "As often as you do this, do it in remembrance of me." But they sin who forbid the giving of both kinds to such as desire to exercise this free will. The fault lies not with the laity, but with the priests. The sacrament does not belong to the priests, but to all, and the priests are not lords but ministers, in duty bound to administer both kinds to those who desire them, and as often as they desire them. If they wrest this right from the laity and forcibly withhold it, they are tyrants. But the laity are without fault, whether they lack one kind or both kinds. They must meanwhile be sustained by their faith and by their desire for the complete sacrament. The priests, being ministers, are bound to administer baptism and absolution to whoever seeks them, because he has a right to them. But if they do not administer them, he that seeks them has at least the full merit of his faith, while they will be accused before Christ as wicked servants. In like manner the holy Fathers of old who dwelt in the desert did not receive the sacrament in any form for many years together.

2.22 Therefore I do not urge that both kinds be seized by force, as though we were bound to this form by a rigorous command. But I instruct men's consciences that they may endure the Roman tyranny, knowing well they have been deprived of their rightful share in the sacrament because of their own sin. This only do I desire – that no one justify the tyranny of Rome, as though it did well to forbid one of the two kinds to the laity. We ought rather to abhor it, withhold our consent, and endure it just as we should do if we were held captive by the Turk and not permitted to use either kind. That is what I meant by saying it seemed well to me that this captivity should be ended by the decree of a general council, our Christian liberty restored to us out of the hands of the Roman tyrant, and every one left free to seek and receive this sacrament, just as he is free to receive baptism and penance. But now they compel us, by the same tyranny, to receive the one kind year after year. So utterly lost is the liberty which Christ has given us. This is but the due reward of our godless ingratitude.

2.23 The second captivity of this sacrament is less grievous so far as the conscience is concerned, yet the very gravest danger threatens the man who would attack it, to say nothing of condemning it. Here I shall be called a Wycliffite and a heretic a thousand times over. But what of that? Since the Roman bishop has ceased to be a bishop and become a tyrant, I fear none of his decrees, for I know that it is not in his power, nor even in that of a general council, to make new articles of faith. Years ago, when I was delving into scholastic theology, the Cardinal of Cambrai gave me food for thought, in his comments on the fourth Book of the Sentences, where he argues with great acumen that to hold that real bread and real wine, and not their accidents only, are present on the altar, is much more probable and requires fewer unnecessary miracles – if only the Church had not decreed otherwise. When I learned later what church it was that had decreed this – namely, the Church of Thomas, i.e., of Aristotle – I waxed bolder, and after floating in a sea of doubt, at last found rest for my conscience in the above view – namely, that it is real bread and real wine, in which Christ's real flesh and blood are present, not otherwise and not less really than they assume to be the case under their accidents. I reached this conclusion because I saw that the opinions of the Thomists, though approved by pope and council, remain but opinions and do not become articles of faith, even though an angel from heaven were to decree otherwise. For what is asserted without Scripture or an approved revelation, may be held as an opinion, but need not be believed. But this opinion of Thomas hangs so completely in the air, devoid of Scripture and reason, that he seems here to have forgotten both his philosophy and his logic. For Aristotle writes about subject and accidents so very differently from St. Thomas, that I think this great man is to be pitied, not only for drawing his opinions in matters of faith from Aristotle, but for attempting to base them on him without understanding his meaning – an unfortunate superstructure upon an unfortunate foundation.

2.24 I therefore permit every man to hold either of these views, as he chooses. My one concern at present is to remove all scruples of conscience, so that no one may fear to become guilty of heresy if he should believe in the presence of real bread and real wine on the altar, and that every one may feel at liberty to ponder, hold and believe either one view or the other, without endangering his salvation. However, I shall now more fully set forth my own view. In the first place, I do not intend to listen or attach the least importance to those who will cry out that this teaching of mine is Wycliffite, Hussite, heretical, and contrary to the decision of the Church, for they are the very persons whom I have convicted of manifold heresies in the matter of indulgences, the freedom of the will and the grace of God, good works and sin, etc. If Wycliffe was once a heretic, they are heretics ten times over, and it is a pleasure to be suspected and accused by such heretics and perverse sophists, whom to please is the height of godlessness. Besides, the only way in which they can prove their opinions and disprove those of others, is by saying, "That is Wycliffite, Hussite, heretical!" They have this feeble retort always on their tongue, and they have nothing else. If you demand a Scripture passage, they say, "This is our opinion, and the decision of the Church – that is, of ourselves!" Thus these men, " reprobate concerning the faith" and untrustworthy, have the audacity to set their own fancies before us in the name of the Church as articles of faith.

2.25 But there are good grounds for my view, and this above all – no violence is to be done to the words of God, whether by man or angel. But they are to be retained in their simplest meaning wherever possible, and to be understood in their grammatical and literal sense unless the context plainly forbids, lest we give our adversaries occasion to make a mockery of all the Scriptures. Thus Origen was repudiated, in ancient times, because he despised the grammatical sense and turned the trees, and all things else written concerning Paradise, into allegories. For it might be concluded from this that God did not create trees. Even so here, when the Evangelists plainly write that Christ took bread and broke it, and the book of Acts and Paul, in their turn, call it bread, we have to think of real bread and real wine, just as we do of a real cup. For even they do not maintain that the cup is transubstantiated. But since it is not necessary to assume a transubstantiation wrought by Divine power, it is to be regarded as a figment of the human mind, for it rests neither on Scripture nor on reason, as we shall see.

2.26 Therefore it is an absurd and unheard-of juggling with words, to understand "bread" to mean "the form, or accidents of bread," and "wine" to mean "the form, or accidents of wine." Why do they not also understand all other things to mean their forms, or accidents? Even if this might be done with all other things, it would yet not be right thus to emasculate the words of God and arbitrarily to empty them of their meaning.

2.27 Moreover, the Church had the true faith for more than twelve hundred years, during which time the holy Fathers never once mentioned this transubstantiation – certainly, a monstrous word for a monstrous idea – until the pseudo-philosophy of Aristotle became rampant in the Church these last three hundred years. During these centuries many other things have been wrongly defined, for example, that the Divine essence neither is begotten nor begets, that the soul is the substantial form of the human body, and the like assertions, which are made without reason or sense, as the Cardinal of Cambray himself admits.

2.28 Perhaps they will say that the danger of idolatry demands that bread and wine be not really present. How ridiculous! The laymen have never become familiar with their subtle philosophy of substance and accidents, and could not grasp it if it were taught them. Besides, there is the same danger in the case of the accidents which remain and which they see, as in the case of the substance which they do not see. For if they do not adore the accidents, but Christ hidden under them, why should they adore the bread, which they do not see?

2.29 But why could not Christ include His body in the substance of the bread just as well as in the accidents? The two substances of fire and iron are so mingled in the heated iron that every part is both iron and fire. Why could not much rather Christ's body be thus contained in every part of the substance of the bread?

2.30 What will they say? We believe that in His birth Christ came forth out of the unopened womb of His mother. Let them say here too that the flesh of the Virgin was meanwhile annihilated, or as they would more aptly say, transubstantiated, so that Christ, after being enfolded in its accidents, finally came forth through the accidents! The same thing will have to be said of the shut door and of the closed opening of the tomb, through which He went in and out without disturbing them. Hence has risen that Babylonian philosophy of constant quantity distinct from the substance, until it has come to such a pass that they themselves no longer know what are accidents and what is substance. For who has ever proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that heat, colour, cold, light, weight or shape are mere accidents? Finally, they have been driven to the fancy that a new substance is created by God for their accidents on the altar – all on account of Aristotle, who says, "It is the essence of an accident to be in something," and endless other monstrosities, all of which they would be rid if they simply permitted real bread to be present. And I rejoice greatly that the simple faith of this sacrament is still to be found at least among the common people. They do not understand, so they do not dispute, whether accidents are present or substance, but believe with a simple faith that Christ's body and blood are truly contained in whatever is there, and leave to those who have nothing else to do the business of disputing about that which contains them.

2.31 But perhaps they will say: From Aristotle we learn that in an affirmative proposition subject and predicate must be identical, or, to set down the beast's own words, in the sixth book of his Metaphysics: "An affirmative proposition demands the agreement of subject and predicate," which they interpret as above. Hence, when it is said, "This is my body," the subject cannot be identical with the bread, but must be identical with the body of Christ.

2.32 What shall we say when Aristotle and the doctrines of men are made to be the arbiters of these lofty and divine matters? Why do we not put aside such curiosity, and cling simply to the word of Christ, willing to remain in ignorance of what here takes place, and content with this, that the real body of Christ is present by virtue of the words? Or is it necessary to comprehend the manner of the divine working in every detail?

2.33 But what do they say to Aristotle's assigning a subject to whatever is predicated of the attributes, although he holds that the substance is the chief subject? Hence for him, "this white," "this large," etc., are subjects of which something is predicated. If that is correct, I ask: If a transubstantiation must be assumed in order that Christ's body is not predicated of the bread, why not also a transaccidentation in order that it be not predicated of the accidents? For the same danger remains if one understands the subject to be "this white" or "this round" is my body, and for the same reason that a transubstantiation is assumed, a transaccidentation must also be assumed, because of this identity of subject and predicate.

2.34 [Si autem, intellectu excedens, eximis accidens, ut non velis subjectum pro eo supponere, cum dicis, "Hoc est corpus meum," Cur non eadem facilitate transcendis substantiam panis, ut et illam velis non accipi per subiectum, ut non minus in substantia quam accidente sit, "hoc corpus meum?" Praesertim, cum divinum illud sit opus, virtutis omnipotentis, quae tantum et taliter in substantia, quantum et qualiter in accidente potest operari.]

2.35 Let us not, however, dabble too much in philosophy. Does not Christ appear to have admirably anticipated such curiosity by saying of the wine, not, "Hoc est sanguis meus," but " Hic est sanguis meus"? And yet more clearly, by bringing in the word "cup," when He said, "This cup is the new testament in my blood." Does it not seem as though He desired to keep us in a simple faith, so that we might but believe His blood to be in the cup? For my part, if I cannot fathom how the bread is the body of Christ, I will take my reason captive to the obedience of Christ, and clinging simply to His word, firmly believe not only that the body of Christ is in the bread, but that the bread is the body of Christ. For this is proved by the words, " He took bread, and giving thanks, He broke it and said, Take, eat; this [i.e., this bread which He took and broke] is my body." And Paul says: " The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" He says not, in the bread, but the bread itself, is the communion of the body of Christ. What does it matter if philosophy cannot fathom this? The Holy Spirit is greater than Aristotle. Does philosophy fathom their transubstantiation, of which they themselves admit that here all philosophy breaks down? But the agreement of the pronoun "this" with "body," in Greek and Latin, is owing to the fact that in these languages the two words are of the same gender. But in the Hebrew language, which has no neuter gender, "this" agrees with "bread," so that it would be proper to say, "Hic est corpus meum." This is proved also by the use of language and by common sense. The subject, certainly, points to the bread, not to the body, when He says, "Hoc est corpus meum," "Das ist mein Leib," – i.e., This bread is my body.

2.36 Therefore it is with the sacrament even as it is with Christ. In order that divinity may dwell in Him, it is not necessary that the human nature be transubstantiated and divinity be contained under its accidents. But both natures are there in their entirety, and it is truly said, "This man is God," and "This God is man." Even though philosophy cannot grasp this, faith grasps it, and the authority of God's Word is greater than the grasp of our intellect. Even so, in order that the real body and the real blood of Christ may be present in the sacrament, it is not necessary that the bread and wine be transubstantiated and Christ be contained under their accidents. But both remain there together, and it is truly said, "This bread is my body, this wine is my blood," and vice versa. Thus I will for now understand it, for the honour of the holy words of God, which I will not allow any petty human argument to override or give to them meanings foreign to them. At the same time, I permit other men to follow the other opinion, which is laid down in the decree Firmiter. Only let them not press us to accept their opinions as articles of faith, as I said above.

2.37 The third captivity of this sacrament is that most wicked abuse of all, in consequence of which there is today no more generally accepted and firmly believed opinion in the Church than this – that the mass is a good work and a sacrifice. This abuse has brought an endless host of others in its wake, so that the faith of this sacrament has become utterly extinct and the holy sacrament has truly been turned into a fair, tavern, and place of merchandise. Hence participations, brotherhoods, intercessions, merits, anniversaries, memorial days, and the like wares are bought and sold, traded and bartered in the Church, and from this priests and monks derive their whole living.

2.38 I am attacking a difficult matter, and one perhaps impossible to abate, since it has become so firmly entrenched through century-long custom and the common consent of men that it would be necessary to abolish most of the books now in vogue, to alter almost the whole external form of the churches, and to introduce, or rather re-introduce, a totally different kind of ceremony. But my Christ lives, and we must be careful to give more heed to the Word of God than to all the thoughts of men and of angels. I will perform the duties of my office, and uncover the facts in the case. I will give the truth as I have received it, freely and without malice. For the rest let every man look to his own salvation. I will faithfully do my part that none may cast on me the blame for his lack of faith and knowledge of the truth, when we appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

2.39 IN THE FIRST PLACE, in order to grasp safely and fortunately a true and unbiased knowledge of this sacrament, we must above all else be careful to put aside whatever has been added by the zeal and devotion of men to the original, simple institution of this sacrament – such things as vestments, ornaments, chants, prayers, organs, candles, and the whole pageantry of outward things. We must turn our eyes and hearts simply to the institution of Christ and to this alone, and put nothing before us but the very word of Christ by which He instituted this sacrament, made it perfect, and committed it to us. For in that word, and in that word alone, reside the power, the nature, and the whole substance of the mass. All else is the work of man, added to the word of Christ. And the mass can be held and remain a mass just as well without it. Now the words of Christ, in which He instituted this sacrament, are these:

2.40 "And while they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it: and gave to His disciples, and said: Take it and eat. This is my body, which shall be given for you. And taking the chalice, He gave thanks, and gave to them, saying: All of you, drink of this. This is the chalice, the new testament in my blood, which shall be shed for you and for many the remission of sins. This do to commemorate me."

2.41 These words the Apostle also delivers and more fully expounds in 1 Corinthians 11. On them we must lean and build as on a firm foundation, if we would not be carried about with every wind of doctrine, even as we have until now been carried about by the wicked doctrines of men, who turn aside the truth. For in these words nothing is omitted that concerns the completeness, the use and the blessing of this sacrament and nothing is included that is superfluous and not necessary for us to know. Whoever sets them aside and meditates or teaches concerning the mass, will teach monstrous and wicked doctrines, as they have done who made of the sacrament an opus operatum and a sacrifice.

2.42 Therefore let this stand at the outset as our infallibly certain proposition – the mass, or Sacrament of the Altar, is Christ's testament which He left behind Him at His death, to be distributed among His believers. For that is the meaning of His word – "This is the chalice, the new testament in my blood." Let this truth stand, I say, as the immovable foundation on which we shall base all that we have to say, for we are going to overthrow, as you will see, all the godless opinions of men imported into this most precious sacrament. Christ, who is the Truth, said truly that this is the new testament in His blood, which is shed for us. Not without reason do I dwell on this sentence. The matter is not at all trivial, and must be most deeply impressed upon us.

2.43 Let us inquire, therefore, what a testament is, and we shall learn at the same time what the mass is, what its use is, what its blessing is, and what its abuse is.

2.44 A testament, as every one knows, is a promise made by one about to die, in which he designates his bequest and appoints his heirs. Therefore a testament involves, first, the death of the testator, and secondly, the promise of the bequest and the naming of the heir. Thus St. Paul discusses at length the nature of a testament in Romans 4, Galatians 3 and 4, and Hebrews 9. The same thing is also clearly seen in these words of Christ. Christ testifies concerning His death when He says: "This is my body, which shall be given; this is my blood, which shall be shed." He designates the bequest when He says: "For remission of sins." And He appoints the heirs when He says: "For you, and for many" – i.e., for such as accept and believe the promise of the testator. For here it is faith that makes men heirs, as we shall see.

2.45 You see, therefore, that what we call the mass is the promise of remission of sins made to us by God – the kind of promise that has been confirmed by the death of the Son of God. For the one difference between a promise and a testament is that a testament is a promise which implies the death of him who makes it. A testator is a man who is about to die making a promise. While he that makes a promise is, if I may so put it, a testator who is not about to die. This testament of Christ was forshadowed in all the promises of God from the beginning of the world. Yes, whatever value those ancient promises possessed was altogether derived from this new promise that was to come in Christ. This is why the words "covenant" and "testament of the Lord" occur so frequently in the Scriptures, which words signified that God would one day die. For where there is a testament, the death of the testator must follow (Hebrews 9). Now God made a testament. Therefore it was necessary that He should die. But God could not die unless He became man. Thus both the incarnation and the death of Christ are briefly understood in this one word "testament."

2.46 From the above it will at once be seen what is the right and what is the wrong use of the mass, what is the worthy and what is the unworthy preparation for it. If the mass is a promise, as has been said, it is to be approached, not with any work, strength or merit, but with faith alone. For where there is the word of God Who makes the promise, there must be the faith of man who takes it. It is plain, therefore, that the first step in our salvation is faith, which clings to the word of the promise made by God, Who without any effort on our part, in free and unmerited mercy makes a beginning and offers us the word of His promise. For He sent His Word, and by it healed them. He did not accept our work and thus heal us. God's Word is the beginning of all. Faith follows it, and love follows faith. Then love works every good work, for it does cause harm, no, it is the fulfilling of the law. In no other way can man come to God and deal with Him than through faith. That is, not man, by any work of his, but God, by His promise, is the author of salvation, so that all things depend on the word of His power, and are upheld and preserved by it, with which word He conceived us, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

2.47 Thus, in order to raise up Adam after the fall, God gave him this promise, addressing the serpent: "I will put hostility between you and the woman, and you seed and her seed. She shall crush your head, and you will lie in wait for her heel." In this word of promise Adam, with his descendants, was carried as it were in God's arms, and by faith in it he was preserved, patiently waiting for the woman who should crush the serpent's head, as God had promised. And in that faith and expectation he died, not knowing when or in what form she would come, yet never doubting that she would come. For such a promise, being the truth of God, preserves, even in hell, those who believe it and wait for it. After this came another promise, made to Noah – to last until the time of Abraham – when a rainbow was set as a sign in the clouds, by faith in which Noah and his descendants found a gracious God. After that He promised Abraham that all nations should be blessed in his seed. This is Abraham's arms, in which his posterity was carried. Then to Moses and the children of Israel, and especially to David, He gave the plain promise of Christ, thereby at last making clear what was meant by the ancient promise to them.

2.48 So it came finally to the most complete promise of the new testament, in which with plain words life and salvation are freely promised, and granted to such as believe the promise. He distinguished this testament by a particular mark from the old, calling it the "new testament." For the old testament, which He gave by Moses, was a promise not of remission of sins or of eternal things, but of temporal things – namely, the land of Canaan – by which no man was renewed in his spirit, to lay hold of the heavenly inheritance. Therefore it was also necessary that irrational beasts should be slain, as types of Christ, that by their blood the testament might be confirmed. So the testament was like the blood, and the promise like the sacrifice. But here He says: "The new testament in my blood" – not in another's, but in His own. By this blood grace is promised, through the Spirit, for the remission of sins, that we may obtain the inheritance.

2.49 The mass, according to its substance, is, therefore, nothing else than the words of Christ mentioned above – "Take and eat." It is as if He said: "Behold, condemned, sinful man, in the pure and unmerited love with which I love you, and by the will of the Father of all mercies, I promise you in these words, even though you do not desire or deserve them, the forgiveness of all your sins and life everlasting. And, so that you may be most certainly assured of this my irrevocable promise, I give my body and shed my blood, thus by my very death confirming this promise, and leaving my body and blood to you as a sign and memorial of this same promise. As often, therefore, as you partake of them, remember me, and praise, magnify, and give thanks for my love and bounty for you."

2.50 From this you will see that nothing else is needed to have a worthy mass than a faith that confidently relies on this promise, believes these words of Christ are true, and does not doubt that these infinite blessings have been bestowed upon it. Following closely behind this faith there follows, by itself, a most sweet stirring of the heart, by which the spirit of man is enlarged and grows fat – that is love, given by the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ – so that he is drawn to Christ, that gracious and good Testator, and made quite another and a new man. Who would not shed tears of gladness, no, nearly faint for the joy he has for Christ, if he believed with unshaken faith that this inestimable promise of Christ belonged to him! How could one help loving so great a Benefactor, who offers, promises and grants, all unasked, such great riches, and this eternal inheritance, to someone unworthy and deserving of something far different?

2.51 Therefore, it is our one misfortune, that we have many masses in the world, and yet none or but the fewest of us recognize, consider and receive these promises and riches that are offered, although truly we should do nothing else in the mass with greater zeal (yes, it demands all our zeal) than set before our eyes, meditate, and ponder these words, these promises of Christ, which truly are the mass itself, in order to exercise, nourish, increase, and strengthen our faith by such daily remembrance. For this is what He commands, saying, "This do in remembrance of me." This should be done by the preachers of the Gospel, in order that this promise might be faithfully impressed upon the people and commended to them, to the awakening of faith in the same.

2.52 But how many are there now who know that the mass is the promise of Christ? I will say nothing of those godless preachers of fables, who teach human traditions instead of this promise. And even if they teach these words of Christ, they do not teach them as a promise or testament, and, therefore, not to the awakening of faith.

2.53 O the pity of it! Under this captivity, they take every precaution that no layman should hear these words of Christ, as if they were too sacred to be delivered to the common people. So mad are we priests that we arrogantly claim that the so-called words of consecration may be said by ourselves alone, as secret words, yet so that they do not profit even us, for we too fail to regard them as promises or as a testament, for the strengthening of faith. Instead of believing them, we reverence them with I know not what superstitious and godless fancies. This misery of ours, what is it but a device of Satan to remove every trace of the mass out of the Church? although he is meanwhile at work filling every nook and corner on earth with masses, that is, abuses and mockeries of God's testament, and burdening the world more and more heavily with grievous sins of idolatry, to its deeper condemnation. For what worse idolatry can there be than to abuse God's promises with perverse opinions and to neglect or extinguish faith in them?

2.54 For God does not deal, nor has He ever dealt, with man otherwise than through a word of promise, as I have said. Again, we cannot deal with God otherwise than through faith in the word of His promise. He does not desire works, nor has He need of them. We deal with men and with ourselves on the basis of works. But He has need of this – that we deem Him true to His promises, wait patiently for Him, and thus worship Him with faith, hope and love. Thus He obtains His glory among us, since it is not of ourselves who run, but of God who shows mercy, promises and gives, that we have and hold every blessing. That is the true worship and service of God which we must perform in the mass. But if the words of promise are not proclaimed, what exercise of faith can there be? And without faith, who can have hope or love? Without faith, hope and love, what service can there be? There is no doubt, therefore, that in our day all priests and monks, together with all their bishops and superiors, are idolaters and in a most perilous state, by reason of this ignorance, abuse and mockery of the mass, or sacrament, or testament of God.

2.55 For any one can easily see that these two – the promise and faith – must go together. For without the promise there is nothing to believe, while without faith the promise remains without effect, for it is established and fulfilled through faith. From this every one will readily gather that the mass, which is nothing else than the promise, is approached and observed only in this faith, without which whatever prayers, preparations, works, signs of the cross, or genuflections are brought to it, are incitements to impiety rather than exercises of piety. For they who come thus prepared are likely to imagine themselves on that account justly entitled to approach the altar, when in reality they are less prepared than at any other time and in any other work, by reason of the unbelief which they bring with them. How many priests will you find every day offering the sacrifice of the mass, who accuse themselves of a horrible crime if they – wretched men! – commit a trifling blunder – such as putting on the wrong robe or forgetting to wash their hands or stumbling over their prayers – but that they neither regard nor believe the mass itself, namely, the divine promise. This causes them not the slightest qualms of conscience. O worthless religion of this our age, the most godless and thankless of all ages!

2.56 Hence the only worthy preparation and proper use of the mass is faith in the mass, that is to say, in the divine promise. Whoever, therefore, is minded to approach the altar and to receive the sacrament, let him beware of appearing empty before the Lord God. But he will appear empty unless he has faith in the mass, or this new testament. What godless work that he could commit would be a more grievous crime against the truth of God, than this unbelief of his, by which, as much as in him lies, he convicts God of being a liar and a maker of empty promises? The safest course, therefore, will be to go to mass in the same spirit in which you would go to hear any other promise of God, that is, not to be ready to perform and bring many works, but to believe and receive all that is there promised, or proclaimed by the priest as having been promised to you. If you do not go in this spirit, beware of going at all. You will surely go to your condemnation.

2.57 I was right, then, in saying that the whole power of the mass consists in the words of Christ, in which He testifies that the remission of sins is bestowed on all those who believe that His body is given and His blood shed for them. For this reason nothing is believe that His body is given and His blood shed for them. For this reason nothing is more important for those who go to hear mass than diligently and in full faith to ponder these words. Unless they do this, all else that they do is in vain. But while the mass is the word of Christ, it is also true that God usually adds to nearly every one of His promises a certain sign as a mark or memorial of His promise, so that we may thereby the more faithfully hold to His promise and be the more forcibly admonished by it. Thus, to his promise to Noah that He would not again destroy the world by a flood, He added His rainbow in the clouds, to show that He would be mindful of His covenant. And after promising Abraham the inheritance in his seed, He gave him the sign of circumcision as the seal of his righteousness by faith. Thus, to Gideon He granted the sign of the dry and the wet fleece, to confirm His promise of victory over the Midianites. And to Ahaz He offered a sign through Isaiah concerning his victory over the kings of Syria and Samaria, to strengthen his faith in the promise. And many such signs of the promises of God do we find in the Scriptures.

2.58 Thus also to the mass, that crown of all His promises, He adds His body and blood in the bread and wine, as a memorial sign of this great promise, as He says, " This do in remembrance of me." Even so in baptism He adds to the words of the promise, the sign of immersion in water. We learn from this that in every promise of God two things are presented to us – the word and the sign – so that we are to understand the word to be the testament, but the sign to be the sacrament. Thus, in the mass, the word of Christ is the testament, and the bread and wine are the sacrament. And as there is greater power in the word than in the sign, so there is greater power in the testament than in the sacrament. For a man can have and use the word, or testament, apart from the sign, or sacrament. "Believe," says Augustine, "and you have eaten." But what does one believe save the word of promise? Therefore I can hold mass every day, yes, every hour, for I can set the words of Christ before me, and with them refresh and strengthen my faith, as often as I choose. That is a truly spiritual eating and drinking.

2.59 Here you may see what great things our theologians of the Sentences have produced. That which is the principal and chief thing, namely, the testament and word of promise, is not treated by one of them. Thus they have obliterated faith and the whole power of the mass. But the second part of the mass – the sign, or sacrament – this alone do they discuss, yet in such a manner that here too they teach not faith but their preparations and opera operata, participations and fruits, as though these were the mass, until they have fallen to babbling of transubstantiation and endless other metaphysical quibbles, and have destroyed the proper understanding and use of both sacrament and testament, altogether abolished faith, and caused Christ's people to forget their God, as the prophet says, days without number. Let the others count the manifold fruits of hearing mass. Focus your attention on this: say and believe with the prophet, that God prepares a table before you in the presence of your enemies, at which your soul may eat and grow fat. But your faith is fed only with the word of divine promise, for " not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." Hence, in the mass you must above all things pay closest heed to the word of promise, as to your rich banquet, green pasture, and sacred refreshment. You must esteem this word higher than all else, trust in it above all things, and cling firmly to it even through the midst of death and all sins. By thus doing you will attain not merely to those tiny drops and crumbs of "fruits of the mass," which some have superstitiously imagined, but to the very fountainhead of life, which is faith in the word, from which every blessing flows. As it is said in John 4: "He who believes in me, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water" and again: " He who will drink of the water that I will give him, it shall become in him a fountain of living water, springing up to life everlasting."

2.60 Now there are two roadblocks that commonly prevent us from gathering the fruits of the mass. First, the fact that we are sinners and unworthy of such great things because of our exceeding vileness. Secondly, the fact that, even if we were worthy, these things are so high that our faint-hearted nature dare not aspire to them or ever hope to attain to them. For to have God for our Father, to be His sons and heirs of all His goods – these are the great blessings that come to us through the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. If you see these things clearly, aren't you more likely to stand in awe before them than to desire to possess them? Against this twofold faintness of ours we must lay hold on the word of Christ and fix our gaze on it much more firmly than on those thoughts of our weakness. For "great are the works of the Lord; all who enjoy them study them," " who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." If they did not surpass our worthiness, our grasp and all our thoughts, they would not be divine. Thus Christ also encourages us when He says: "Fear not, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you a kingdom." For it is just this overflowing goodness of the incomprehensible God, lavished upon us through Christ, that moves us to love Him again with our whole heart above all things, to be drawn to Him with all confidence, to despise all things else, and be ready to suffer all things for Him. For this reason, this sacrament is correctly called "a fount of love."

2.61 Let us take an illustration of this from human experience. If a thousand gold coins were bequeathed by a rich lord to a beggar or an unworthy and wicked servant, it is certain that he would boldly claim and take them regardless of his unworthiness and the greatness of the bequest. And if any one should seek to oppose him by pointing out his unworthiness and the large amount of the legacy, what do you suppose he would say? Certainly, he would say: "What is that to you? What I accept, I accept not on my merits or by any right that I may personally have to it. I know that I am unworthy and receive more than I have deserved, no, I have deserved the very opposite. But I claim it because it is so written in the will, and on the account of another's goodness. If it was not an unworthy thing for him to bequeath so great a sum to an unworthy person, why should I refuse to accept this other man's gracious gift?" With such thoughts we need to fortify the consciences of men against all qualms and scruples, that they may lay hold of the promise of Christ with unwavering faith, and take the greatest care to approach the sacrament, not trusting in their confession, prayer and preparation, but rather despairing of these and with a proud confidence in Christ Who gives the promise. For, as we have said again and again, the word of promise must here reign supreme in a pure and unalloyed faith, and such faith is the one and all-sufficient preparation.

2.62 Hence we see how angry God is with us, in that he has permitted godless teachers to conceal the words of this testament from us, and thereby, as much as in them lay, to extinguish faith. And the inevitable result of this extinguishing of faith is even now plainly to be seen – namely, the most godless superstition of works. For when faith dies and the word of faith is silent, works and the traditions of works immediately crowd into their place. By them we have been carried away out of our own land, as in a Babylonian captivity, and despoiled of all our precious possessions. This has been the fate of the mass. It has been converted by the teaching of godless men into a good work, which they themselves call an opus operatum and by which they presumptuously imagine themselves all-powerful with God. Thereupon they proceeded to the very height of madness, and having invented the lie that the mass works ex opere operato, they asserted further that it is none the less profitable to others, even if it be harmful to the wicked priest celebrating it. On such a foundation of sand they base their applications, participations, sodalities, anniversaries and numberless other money-making schemes.

2.63 These lures are so powerful, widespread and firmly entrenched that you will scarcely be able to prevail against them unless you keep before you with unremitting care the real meaning of the mass, and bear well in mind what has been said above. We have seen that the mass is nothing else than the divine promise or testament of Christ, sealed with the sacrament of His body and blood. If that is true, you will understand that it cannot possibly be a work, and that there is nothing to do in it, nor can it be dealt within any other way than by faith alone. And faith is not a work, but the mistress and the life of all works. Where in all the world is there a man so foolish as to regard a promise made to him, or a testament given to him, as a good work which by his acceptance of it he renders to the testator? What heir will imagine he is doing his departed father a kindness by accepting the terms of the will and the inheritance bequeathed to him? What godless audacity is it, therefore, when we who are to receive the testament of God come as those who would perform a good work for Him! This ignorance of the testament, this captivity of the sacrament – are they not too sad for tears? When we ought to be grateful for benefits received, we come in our pride to give that which we ought to take, mocking with unheard-of perversity the mercy of the Giver by giving as a work the thing we receive as a gift. So the testator, instead of being the dispenser of His own goods, becomes the recipient of ours. What sacrilege!

2.64 Who has ever been so mad as to regard baptism as a good work, or to believe that by being baptised he was performing a work which he might offer to God for himself and communicate to others? If, therefore, there is no good work that can be communicated to others in this one sacrament or testament, neither will there be any in the mass, since it too is nothing else than a testament and sacrament. Hence it is a manifest and wicked error to offer or apply masses for sins, for satisfactions, for the dead, or for any necessity whatsoever of one's own or of others. You will readily see the obvious truth of this if you but hold firmly that the mass is a divine promise, which can profit no one, be applied to no one, intercede for no one, and be communicated to no one, save him alone who believes with a faith of his own. Who can receive or apply, in behalf of another, the promise of God, which demands the personal faith of every individual? Can I give to another what God has promised, even if he does not believe? Can I believe for another, or cause another to believe? But this is what I must do if I am able to apply and communicate the mass to others. For there are but two things in the mass – the promise of God, and the faith of man which takes that which the promise offers. But if it is true that I can do this, then I can also hear and believe the Gospel for others, I can be baptised for another, I can be absolved from sins for another, I can also partake of the Sacrament of the Altar for another, and – to run the gamut of their sacraments also – I can marry a wife for another, be ordained for another, receive confirmation and extreme unction for another!

2.65 So, then, why didn't Abraham believe for all the Jews? Why was faith in the promise made to Abraham demanded of every individual Jew? Therefore, let this irrefutable truth stand fast. Where there is a divine promise every one must stand upon his own feet, every one's personal faith is demanded, every one will give an account for himself and will bear his own burden, as it is said in the last chapter of Mark: "He that believes and is baptised, shall be saved. But he that does not believe, shall be damned." Even so everyone may derive a blessing from the mass for himself alone and only by his own faith, and no one can commune for any other. Just as the priest cannot administer the sacrament to any one in another's place, but administers the same sacrament to each individual by himself. For in consecrating and administering, the priests are our ministers, through whom we do not offer a good work or commune (in the active), but receive the promises and the sign and are communed (in the passive). That has remained to this day the custom among the laity, for they are not said to do good, but to receive it. But the priests have departed into godless ways. Out of the sacrament and testament of God, the source of blessings to be received, they have made a good work which they may communicate and offer to others.

2.66 But you will say: "How is this? Will you not overturn the practice and teaching of all the churches and monasteries, by virtue of which they have flourished these many centuries? For the mass is the foundation of their anniversaries, intercessions, applications, communications, etc. – that is to say, of their fat income." I answer: This is the very thing that has constrained me to write of the captivity of the Church, for in this manner the adorable testament of God has been subjected to the bondage of a godless traffic, through the opinions and traditions of wicked men, who, passing over the Word of God, have put forth the thoughts of their own hearts and misled the whole world. What do I care for the number and influence of those who are in this error? The truth is mightier than they all. If you are able to refute Christ, according to Whom the mass is a testament and sacrament, then I will admit that they are right. Or if you can bring yourself to say that you are doing a good work, when you receive the benefit of the testament, or when you use this sacrament of promise in order to receive it, then I will gladly condemn my teachings. But since you can do neither, why do you hesitate to turn your back on the multitude who go after evil, and to give God the glory and confess His truth? Which is, indeed, that all priests today are perversely mistaken, who regard the mass as a work whereby they may relieve their own necessities and those of others, dead or alive. I am uttering unheard-of and startling things. But if you will consider the meaning of the mass, you will realize that I have spoken the truth. The fault lies with our false sense of security, in which we have become blind to the wrath of God that is raging against us.

2.67 I am ready, however, to admit that the prayers which we pour out before God when we are gathered together to partake of the mass, are good works or benefits, which we impart, apply and communicate to one another, and which we offer for one another. As James teaches us to pray for one another that we may be saved, and as Paul, in 1 Timothy 2, commands that supplications, prayers and intercessions be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in high station. These are not the mass, but works of the mass – if the prayers of heart and lips may be called works – for they flow from the faith that is kindled or increased in the sacrament. For the mass, being the promise of God, is not fulfilled by praying, but only by believing. But when we believe, we shall also pray and perform every good work. But what priest offers the sacrifice of the mass in this sense and believes that he is offering up nothing but the prayers? They all imagine themselves to be offering up Christ Himself, as all-sufficient sacrifice, to God the Father, and to be performing a good work for all whom they have the intention to benefit. For they put their trust in the work which the mass accomplishes, and they do not ascribe this work to prayer. Thus, gradually, the error has grown, until they have come to ascribe to the sacrament what belongs to the prayers, and to offer to God what should be received as a benefit.

2.68 It is necessary, therefore, to make a sharp distinction between the testament or sacrament itself and the prayers which are there offered. And it is no less necessary to bear in mind that the prayers avail nothing, either for him who offers them or for those for whom they are offered, unless the sacrament be first received in faith, so that it is faith that offers the prayers, for it alone is heard, as James teaches in his first chapter. So great is the difference between prayer and the mass. The prayer may be extended to as many persons as one desires. But the mass is received by none but the person who believes for himself, and only in proportion to his faith. It cannot be given either to God or to men, but God alone gives it, by the ministration of the priest, to such men as receive it by faith alone, without any works or merits. For no one would dare to make the mad assertion that a ragged beggar does a good work when he comes to receive a gift from a rich man. But the mass is, as has been said, the gift and promise of God, offered to all men by the hand of the priest.

2.69 It is certain, therefore, that the mass is not a work which may be communicated to others, but it is the object, as it is called, of faith, for the strengthening and nourishing of the personal faith of each individual. But there is yet another stumbling-block that must be removed, and this is much greater and the most dangerous of all. It is the common belief that the mass is a sacrifice, which is offered to God. Even the words of the canon tend in this direction, when they speak of "these gifts," "these offerings," "this holy sacrifice," and farther on, of "this offering." Prayer also is made, in so many words, "that the sacrifice may be accepted even as the sacrifice of Abel," etc., and hence Christ is termed the "Sacrifice of the altar." In addition to this there are the sayings of the holy Fathers, the great number of examples, and the constant usage and custom of all the world.

2.70 We must resolutely oppose all of this, firmly entrenched as it is, with the words and example of Christ. For unless we hold fast to the truth, that the mass is the promise or testament of Christ, as the words clearly say, we shall lose the whole Gospel and all our comfort. Let us permit nothing to prevail against these words, even though an angel from heaven should teach otherwise. For there is nothing said in them of a work or a sacrifice. Moreover, we have also the example of Christ on our side. For at the Last Supper, when He instituted this sacrament and established this testament, Christ did not offer Himself to God the Father, nor did He perform a good work on behalf of others, but He set this testament before each of them that sat at table with Him and offered him the sign. Now, the more closely our mass resembles that first mass of all, which Christ performed at the Last Supper, the more Christian will it be. But Christ's mass was most simple, without the pageantry of vestments, genuflections, chants and other ceremonies. Indeed, if it were necessary to offer the mass as a sacrifice, then Christ's institution of it was not complete.

2.71 Not that any one should condemn the Church universal for embellishing and amplifying the mass with many additional rites and ceremonies. But this is what we contend for: no one should be deceived by the glamour of the ceremonies and entangled in the multitude of pompous forms, and thus lose the simplicity of the mass itself, and indeed practice a sort of transubstantiation – losing sight of the simple substance of the mass and clinging to the manifold accidents of outward pomp. For whatever has been added to the word and example of Christ, is an accident of the mass, and ought to be regarded just as we regard the so-called monstrances and corporal cloths in which the host itself is contained. Therefore, as distributing a testament, or accepting a promise, differs diametrically from offering a sacrifice, so it is a contradiction in terms to call the mass a sacrifice. The former is something that we receive, while the latter is something that we offer. The same thing cannot be received and offered at the same time, nor can it be both given and taken by the same person. Just as little as our prayer can be the same as that which our prayer obtains, or the act of praying the same as the act of receiving the answer to our prayer.

2.72 What shall we say, then, about the canon of the mass and the sayings of the Fathers? First of all, if there were nothing at all to be said against them, it would yet be the safer course to reject them all rather than admit that the mass is a work or a sacrifice, lest we deny the word of Christ and overthrow faith together with the mass. Nevertheless, not to reject altogether the canons and the Fathers, we shall say the following: The Apostle instructs us in 1 Corinthians 11 that it was customary for Christ's believers, when they came together to mass, to bring with them meat and drink, which they called "collections" and distributed among all who were in need, after the example of the apostles in Acts 4. From this store was taken the portion of bread and wine that was consecrated for use in the sacrament. And since all this store of meat and drink was sanctified by the word and by prayer, being "lifted up" according to the Hebrew rite of which we read in Moses, the words and the rite of this lifting up, or offering, have come down to us, although the custom of collecting that which was offered, or lifted up, has fallen long since into disuse. Thus, in Isaiah 37, Hezekiah commanded Isaiah to lift up his prayer in the sight of God for the remnant. The Psalmist sings: "Lift up your hands to the holy places" and "To you will I lift up my hands." And in 1 Timothy 2 we read: "Lifting up pure hands in every place." For this reason the words "sacrifice" and "offering" must be taken to refer, not to the sacrament and testament, but to these collections, from this also the word "collect" has come down to us, as meaning the prayers said in the mass.

2.73 The same thing is indicated when the priest elevates the bread and the chalice immediately after the consecration, whereby he shows that he is not offering anything to God, for he does not say a single word here about a victim or an offering. But this elevation is either a survival of that Hebrew rite of lifting up what was received with thanksgiving and returned to God, or else it is an admonition to us, to provoke us to faith in this testament which the priest has set forth and exhibited in the words of Christ, so that now he shows us also the sign of the testament. Thus the offering of the bread properly accompanies the demonstrative this in the words, "This is my body," by which sign the priest addresses us gathered about him. In like manner the offering of the chalice accompanies the demonstrative this in the words, "This chalice is the new testament, etc." For it is faith that the priest ought to awaken in us by this act of elevation. I wish that, as he elevates the sign, or sacrament, openly before our eyes, he might also sound in our ears the words of the testament with a loud, clear voice, and in the language of the people, whatever it may be, in order that faith may be the more effectively awakened. For why may mass be said in Greek and Latin and Hebrew, and not also in German or in any other language?

2.74 Let the priests, therefore, who in these corrupt and perilous times offer the sacrifice of the mass, take heed, first, that the words of the greater and the lesser canon together with the collects, which smack too strongly of sacrifice, be not referred by them to the sacrament, but to the bread and wine which they consecrate, or to the prayers which they say. For the bread and wine are offered at the first, in order that they may be blessed and thus sanctified by the Word and by prayer. But after they have been blessed and consecrated, they are no longer offered, but received as a gift from God. And let the priest bear in mind that the Gospel is to be set above all canons and collects devised by men. The Gospel does not sanction the calling of the mass a sacrifice, as has been shown.

2.75 Further, when a priest celebrates a public mass, he should determine to do nothing else through the mass than to commune himself and others. Yet he may at the same time offer prayers for himself and for others, but he must beware lest he presume to offer the mass. But let him determine to commune himself, if he holds a private mass. The private mass does not differ in the least from the ordinary communion which any layman receives at the hand of the priest, and has no greater effect, apart from the special prayers and the fact that the priest consecrates the elements for himself and administers them to himself. So far as the blessing of the mass and sacrament is concerned, we are all of us on an equal footing, whether we be priests or laymen.

2.76 If a priest be requested by others to celebrate so-called "votive" masses, let him beware of accepting a reward for the mass, or of presuming to offer a votive sacrifice. He should be careful to refer all to the prayers which he offers for the dead or the living, saying within himself, "I will go and partake of the sacrament for myself alone, and while partaking I will say a prayer for this one and that." Thus he will take his reward – to buy him food and clothing – not for the mass, but for the prayers. And let him not be disturbed because all the world holds and practices the contrary. You have the most sure Gospel, and relying on this you may well despise the opinions of men. But if you despise me and insist upon offering the mass and not the prayers alone, know that I have faithfully warned you and will be without blame on the day of judgment. You will have to bear your sin alone. I have said what I was bound to say as brother to brother for his soul's salvation. Yours will be the gain if you observe it, yours the loss if you neglect it. And if some should even condemn what I have said, I reply in the words of Paul: " But evil men and seducers shall grow worse and worse: erring and driving into error."

2.77 From the above every one will readily understand what there is in that often quoted saying of Gregory's: "A mass celebrated by a wicked priest is not to be considered of less effect than one celebrated by any godly priest. St. Peter's mass would not have been better than Judas the traitor's, if they had offered the sacrifice of the mass." This saying has served many as a cloak to cover their godless doings, and because of it they have invented the distinction between opus operati and opus operantis, so as to be free to lead wicked lives themselves and yet to benefit other men. Gregory speaks truth, but they misunderstand and pervert his words. For it is true beyond a question, that the testament or sacrament is given and received through the ministration of wicked priests no less completely than through the ministration of the most saintly. For who has any doubt that the Gospel is preached by the ungodly? Now the mass is part of the Gospel, no, its sum and substance. For what is the whole Gospel but the good tidings of the forgiveness of sins? But whatever can be said of the forgiveness of sins and the mercy of God, is all briefly comprehended in the word of this testament. So popular sermons ought to be nothing else than expositions of the mass, that is, a setting forth of the divine promise of this testament. Doing this teaches faith and truly edifies the Church. But in our day the expounders of the mass play with the allegories of human rites and make it a joke to people.

2.78 Therefore, just as a wicked priest may baptise, that is, apply the word of promise and the sign of the water to a candidate for baptism, so he may also set forth the promise of this sacrament and administer it to those who partake, and even himself partake, like Judas the traitor, at the Lord's Supper. It still remains always the same sacrament and testament, which works in the believer its own work, in the unbeliever a "strange work." But when it comes to offering a sacrifice the case is quite different. For not the mass but the prayers are offered to God, and therefore it is as plain as day that the offerings of a wicked priest avail nothing, but, as Gregory says again, when an unworthy intercessor is chosen, the heart of the judge is moved to greater displeasure. We must, therefore, not confound these two – the mass and the prayers, the sacrament and the work, the testament and the sacrifice. For the one comes from God to us, through the ministration of the priest, and demands our faith, the other proceeds from our faith to God, through the priest, and demands His answer. The former descends, the latter ascends. Therefore the former does not necessarily require a worthy and godly minister, but the latter does indeed require such a priest, because " God does not hear sinners." He knows how to send down blessings through evildoers, but He does not accept the work of any evildoer, as He showed in the case of Cain, and as it is said in Proverbs 15, "The victims of the wicked are abominable to the Lord" and in Romans 14, "All that is not of faith is sin."

2.79 But in order to make an end of this first part, we must take up one remaining point against which an opponent might arise. From all that has been said we conclude that the mass was provided only for such as have a sad, afflicted, disturbed, perplexed and erring conscience, and that they alone commune worthily. For, since the word of divine promise in this sacrament sets forth the remission of sins, that man may fearlessly draw near, whoever he be, whose sins distress him, either with remorse for past or with temptation to future wrongdoing. For this testament of Christ is the one remedy against sins, past, present and future, if you but cling to it with unwavering faith and believe that what the words of the testament declare is freely granted to you. But if you do not believe this, you will never, nowhere, and by no works or efforts of your own, find peace of conscience. For faith alone sets the conscience at peace, and unbelief alone keeps the conscience troubled.

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

3.1 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to the riches of His mercy has preserved in His Church this sacrament at least, untouched and untainted by the ordinances of men, and has made it free to all nations and every estate of mankind, nor suffered it to be oppressed by the filthy and godless monsters of greed and superstition. For He desired that by it little children, incapable of greed and superstition, might be initiated and sanctified in the simple faith of His Word. Even today baptism's chief blessing is for them. But if this sacrament were to be given to adults and older people, I think it could not possibly have retained its power and its glory against the tyranny of greed and superstition which has everywhere laid waste to divine things. Doubtless the wisdom of the flesh would here too have devised its preparations and worthinesses, its reservations, restrictions, and I know not what other snares for taking money, until water fetched as high a price as parchment does now.

3.2 But Satan, though he could not quench the power of baptism in little children, nevertheless succeeded in quenching it in all adults, so that scarcely anyone calls to mind their baptism and still fewer glory in it. So many other ways have they discovered of ridding themselves of their sins and of reaching heaven. The source of these false opinions is that dangerous saying of St. Jerome's – either unhappily phrased or wrongly interpreted – which he terms penance "the second plank" after the shipwreck, as if baptism were not penance. Accordingly, when men fall into sin, they despair of "the first plank," which is the ship, as though it had gone under, and fasten all their faith on the second plank, that is, penance. This has produced those endless burdens of vows, religious works, satisfactions, pilgrimages, indulgences, and sects, from this has arisen that flood of books, questions, opinions and human traditions, which the world cannot contain. So that this tyranny plays worse havoc with the Church of God than any tyrant ever did with the Jewish people or with any other nation under heaven.

3.3 It was the duty of the pontiffs to abate this evil, and with all diligence to lead Christians to the true understanding of baptism, so that they might know what manner of men they are and how Christians ought to live. But instead of this, their work is now to lead the people as far astray as possible from their baptism, to immerse all men in the flood of their oppression, and to cause the people of Christ, as the prophet says, to forget Him days without number. (Jeremiah 2:32) How unfortunate are all who bear the name of pope today! Not only do they not know or do what popes should do, but they are ignorant of what they ought to know and do. They fulfill the saying in Isaiah 56: "His watchmen are all blind, they are all ignorant. The shepherds themselves knew no understanding. All have declined into their own way, every one after his own gain."

3.4 Now, the first thing in baptism to be considered is the divine promise, which says: " He that believes and is baptised shall be saved." This promise must be set far above all the glitter of works, vows, religious orders, and whatever man has added to it. For on it all our salvation depends. We must consider this promise, exercise our faith in it and never our salvation depends. We must consider this promise, exercise our faith in it and never doubt that we are saved when we are baptised. For unless this faith be present or be conferred in baptism, we gain nothing from baptism. No, it becomes a hindrance to us, not only in the moment of its reception, but all the days of our life. For such lack of faith calls God's promise a lie, and this is the blackest of all sins. When we try to exercise this faith, we shall at once perceive how difficult it is to believe this promise of God. For our human weakness, conscious of its sins, finds nothing more difficult to believe than that it is saved or will be saved. Yet unless it does believe this, it cannot be saved, because it does not believe the truth of God that promises salvation.

3.5 This message should have been persistently impressed upon the people and this promise diligently repeated to them. Their baptism should have been called again and again to their mind, and faith constantly awakened and nourished. Just as the truth of this divine promise, once pronounced over us, continues to death, so our faith in the same ought never to cease, but to be nourished and strengthened until death, by the continual remembrance of this promise made to us in baptism. Therefore, when we rise from sins, or repent, we are only returning to the power and the faith of baptism from this we fell, and find our way back to the promise then made to us, from which we departed when we sinned. For the truth of the promise once made remains steadfast, ever ready to receive us back with open arms when we return. This, if I am not mistaken, is the real meaning of the obscure saying, that baptism is the beginning and foundation of all the sacraments, without which none of the others may be received.

3.6 Therefore a penitent will gain much by laying hold of the memory of his baptism above all else, confidently calling to mind the promise of God, which he has forsaken. He should plead it with His Lord, rejoicing that he is baptised and therefore is yet within the fortress of salvation. He should detest his wicked ingratitude in falling away from its faith and truth. His soul will find wondrous comfort, and will be encouraged to hope for mercy, when he considers that the divine promise which God made to him and which cannot possibly lie, still stands unbroken and unchanged, yes, unchangeable by any sins, as Paul says in 2 Timothy 2. "If we do not believe, He continues to be faithful, He cannot deny Himself." Yes, this truth of God will sustain him, so that if all else should sink in ruins, this truth, if he believes it, will not fail him. For in it he has a shield against all assaults of the enemy, an answer to the sins that disturb his conscience, an antidote for the dread of death and judgment, and a comfort in every temptation – namely, this one truth – he can say, " God is faithful that promised, Whose sign I have received in my baptism. If God be for me, who is against me?"

3.7 The children of Israel, whenever they repented of their sins, turned their thoughts first of all to the exodus from Egypt, and, remembering this, returned to God Who had brought them out. This memory and this refuge were many times impressed upon them by Moses, and afterward repeated by David. How much rather ought we to call to mind our exodus from Egypt, and, remembering, turn back again to Him Who led us forth through the washing of regeneration, which we are bidden remember for this very purpose. And this we can do most fittingly in the sacrament of bread and wine. Indeed, in ancient times these three sacraments –penance, baptism and the bread – were all celebrated at the same service, and one supplemented and assisted the other. We read also of a certain holy virgin who in every time of temptation made baptism her sole defense, saying simply, "I am a Christian." Immediately the adversary fled from her, for he knew the power of her baptism and of her faith which clung to the truth of God's promise.

3.8 See, how rich therefore is a Christian, the one who is baptised! Even if he wants to, he cannot lose his salvation, however much he sin, unless he will not believe. For no sin can condemn him save unbelief alone. All other sins – so long as the faith in God's promise made in baptism returns or remains –all other sins, I say, are immediately blotted out through that same faith, or rather through the truth of God, because He cannot deny Himself. If only you confess Him and cling believing to Him that promises. But as for contrition, confession of sins, and satisfaction – along with all those carefully thought out exercises of men – if you turn your attention to them and neglect this truth of God, they will suddenly fail you and leave you more wretched than before. For whatever is done without faith in the truth of God, is vanity of vanities and vexation of spirit.

3.9 Again, how perilous, no, how false it is to suppose that penance is the second plank after the shipwreck! How harmful an error it is to believe that the power of baptism is broken, and the ship has foundered, because we have sinned! No! That one, solid and unsinkable ship remains, and is never broken up into floating timbers. It carries all those who are brought to the harbor of salvation. It is the truth of God giving us its promise in the sacraments. Many, indeed, rashly leap overboard and perish in the waves. These are they who depart from faith in the promise and plunge into sin. But the ship herself remains intact and holds her steady course. If one be able somehow to return to the ship, it is not on any plank but in the good ship herself that he is carried to life. Such a one is he who through faith returns to the sure promise of God that lasts forever. Therefore Peter, in 1 Peter 1, rebukes those who sin, because they have forgotten that they were purged from their old sins, in which words he doubtless chides their ingratitude for the baptism they had received and their wicked unbelief.

3.10 What is the good, then, of writing much on baptism and yet not teaching this faith in the promise? All the sacraments were instituted for the purpose of nourishing faith, but these godless men so completely pass over this faith that they even assert a man dare not be certain of the forgiveness of sins, that is, of the grace of the sacraments. With such wicked teachings they delude the world, and not only take captive but altogether destroy the sacrament of baptism, in which the chief glory of our conscience consists. Meanwhile they madly rage against the miserable souls of men with their contritions, anxious confessions, circumstances, satisfactions, works and endless other absurdities. Read, therefore, with great caution the Master of the Sentences in his fourth book, or, better yet, despise him together with all his commentators, who at their best write only of the material and form of the sacraments, that is, they discuss the dead and death-dealing letter of the sacraments, but pass over in utter silence the spirit, life and use, that is, the truth of the divine promise and our faith.

3.11 So be careful, that the external pomp of works and the deceits of human traditions mislead you, so that you may not wrong the divine truth and your faith. If you would be saved, you must begin with the faith of the sacraments, without any works whatever. But on faith the works will follow. Only do not think lightly of faith, which is a work, and of all works the most excellent and the most difficult to do. Through it alone you will be saved, even if you should be compelled to do without any other works. For it is a work of God, not of man, as Paul teaches. The other works He works through us and with our help, but this one He works in us and without our help.

3.12 From this we can clearly see the difference, in baptism, between man the minister and God the Doer. For man baptises and does not baptise. He baptises, for he performs the work, immersing the person to be baptised. He does not baptise, for in that act he officiates not by his own authority, but as God's representative. Hence, we ought to receive baptism at the hands of a man just as if Christ Himself, no, God Himself, were baptising us with His own hands. For it is not man's baptism, but Christ's and God's baptism, which we receive by the hand of a man, just as every other created thing that we make use of by the hand of another, is God's alone. Therefore beware of dividing baptism in such a way as to ascribe the outward part to man and the inward part to God. Ascribe both to God alone, and look upon the person administering it as the instrument in God's hands, by which the Lord sitting in heaven thrusts you under the water with His own hands, and speaking by the mouth of His minister promises you, on earth with a human voice, the forgiveness of your sins.

3.13 This the words themselves indicate, when the priest says: " I baptise you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen," and not: "I baptise you in my own name." It is as though he said: " What I do, I do not by my own authority, but in the name and as God's representative, so that you should regard it just as if our Lord Himself had done it in a visible manner. The Doer and the minister are different persons, but the work of both is the same work, or, rather, it is the work of the Doer alone, through my ministry." For I hold that "in the name of" refers to the person of the Doer, so that the name of the Lord is not only to be uttered and invoked while the work is being done, but the work itself is to be done not as one's own work, but in the name and as another's representative. In this sense, in Matthew 24, Christ says, "Many shall come in my name," and in Romans 1 it is said, "By whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith, in all nations, for His name."

3.14 This view I freely endorse. It is very comforting and greatly aids faith to know that one has been baptised not by man, but by the Triune God Himself through a man acting among us in His name. This will dispose of that fruitless quarrel about the "form" of baptism, as these words are called. The Greeks say: "May the servant of Christ be baptised," while the Latins say: "I baptise." Others again, pedantic triflers, condemn the use of the words, "I baptise you in the name of Jesus Christ" – although it is certain that the Apostles used this formula in baptising, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles – they would allow no other form to be valid than this: " I baptise you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." But their contention is in vain, for they bring no proof, but merely assert their own dreams. Baptism truly saves in whatever way it is administered, as long as it is not administered in the name of man but in the name of God. No, I have no doubt that if one received baptism in the name of the Lord, even though the wicked minister should not give it in the name of the Lord, he would yet be truly baptised in the name of the Lord. For the effect of baptism depends not so much on the faith or practice of him that confers it as on the faith or practice of the one who receives it – of which we have an illustration in the case of the play-actor who was baptised as a joke. Such anxious disputings and questionings are aroused in us by those who ascribe nothing to faith and everything to works and forms, while we owe everything to faith alone and nothing to forms, and faith makes us free in spirit from all those scruples and fancies.

3.15 The second part of baptism is the sign, or sacrament, which is that immersion into water from this also it derives its name. For the Greek baptize means "I immerse," and baptisma means "immersion." For, as has been said, signs are added to the divine promises to represent that which the words signify, or, as they now say, that which the sacrament "effectively signifies." We shall see how much of truth there is in this.

3.16 The great majority have supposed that there is some hidden spiritual power in the word or in the water, which works the grace of God in the soul of the recipient. Others deny this and hold that there is no power in the sacraments, but that grace is given by God alone, Who according to His covenant aids the sacraments He has instituted. Yet all are agreed that the sacraments are effective signs of grace, and they reach this conclusion by this one argument: If the sacraments of the New Law merely "signified," it would not be apparent in what respect they surpassed the sacraments of the Old Law. Hence they have been driven to attribute such great power to the sacraments of the New Law that in their opinion they benefit even such men as are in mortal sins, and that they do not require faith or grace. It is sufficient not to oppose a "bar," that is, an actual intention to sin again.

3.17 But these views must be carefully avoided and shunned, because they are godless and faithless, being contrary to faith and to the nature of the sacraments. For it is an error to hold that the sacraments of the New Law differ from those of the Old Law in the effectiveness of their "signifying." The "signifying" of both is equally effective. The same God Who now saves me by baptism saved Abel by his sacrifice, Noah by the rainbow, Abraham by circumcision, and all the others by their respective signs. So far as the "signifying" is concerned, there is no difference between a sacrament of the Old Law and one of the New – provided that by the Old Law you mean that which God did among the patriarchs and other fathers in the days of the law. But those signs which were given to the patriarchs and fathers must be sharply distinguished from the legal types which Moses instituted in his law, such as the priestly rites concerning robes, vessels, meats, dwellings, and the like. Between these and the sacraments of the New Law there is a vast difference, but no less between them and those signs that God from time to time gave to the fathers living under the law, such as the sign of Gideon's fleece, Manoah's sacrifice, or the sign which Isaiah offered to Ahaz, in Isaiah 7. for to these signs God attached a certain promise which required faith in Him.

3.18 This, then, is the difference between the legal types and the new and old signs is that the types do not have attached to them any word of promise requiring faith. Hence they are not signs of justification, for they are not sacraments of the faith that alone justifies, but only sacraments of works. Their whole power and nature consisted in works, not in faith, and he that observed them fulfilled them, even if he did it without faith. But our signs, or sacraments, as well as those of the fathers, have attached to them a word of promise, which requires faith, and they cannot be fulfilled by any other work. Hence they are signs or sacraments of justification, for they are the sacraments of justifying faith and not of works. Their whole efficacy, therefore, consists in faith itself, not in the doing of a work. For whoever believes them fulfils them, even if he should not do a single work. From this has arisen the saying, "Not the sacrament but the faith of the sacrament justifies." Thus circumcision did not justify Abraham and his seed, and yet the Apostle calls it the seal of the righteousness of faith, because faith in the promise, to which circumcision was added, justified him and fulfilled that which circumcision signified. For faith was the spiritual circumcision of the foreskin of the heart, which was symbolised by the literal circumcision of the flesh. And in the same manner it was obviously not Abel's sacrifice that justified him, but it was his faith, by which he offered himself wholly to God and which was symbolised by the outward sacrifice.

3.19 Even so it is not baptism that justifies or benefits anyone, but it is faith in the word of promise, to which baptism is added. This faith justifies, and fulfils that which baptism signifies. For faith is the submersion of the old man and the emerging of the new. Therefore it cannot be that the new sacraments differ from the old, for both have the divine promise and the same spirit of faith. But they do differ vastly from the ancient types on account of the word of promise, which is the one decisive point of difference. Even so, today, the outward show of vestments, holy places, meats and of all the endless ceremonies has doubtless a fine symbolical meaning, which is to be spiritually fulfilled. Yet because there is no word of divine promise attached to these things, they can never be compared with the signs of baptism and of the bread, nor do they in any way justify or benefit one, since they are fulfilled in the very observance, apart from faith. For while they are taking place or are being performed, they are being fulfilled. The Apostle says of them, in Colossians 2,"Which are all to perish with the using, after the commandments and doctrines of men." The sacraments, on the contrary, are not fulfilled when they are observed, but when they are believed.

3.20 It cannot be true, therefore, that there is in the sacraments a power efficacious for justification, or that they are effective signs of grace. All such assertions tend to destroy faith, and arise from ignorance of the divine promise. Unless you should call them effective in the sense that they certainly and efficaciously impart grace, where faith is unmistakably present. But it is not in this sense that efficacy is now ascribed to them. Witness the fact that they are said to benefit all men, even the godless and unbelieving, provided they do not put an "obstacle" in the path of grace – as if such unbelief were not in itself the most obstinate and hostile of all obstacles to grace. That is how firmly they are bent on turning the sacrament into a command, and faith into a work. For if the sacrament confers grace on me because I receive it, then indeed I obtain grace by virtue of my work and not of faith. I lay hold not on the promise in the sacrament, but on the sign instituted and commanded by God. Do you not see, then, how completely the sacraments have been misunderstood by our theologians of the Sentences? They do not account for either faith or the promise, in their discussions on the sacraments. They only cling to the sign and the use of the sign, and draw us away from faith to the work, from the word to the sign. Thus they have not only carried the sacraments captive (as I have said), but have completely destroyed them, as far as they were able.

3.21 Therefore, let us open our eyes and learn to give more heed to the word than to the sign, and to faith than to the work, or the use of the sign, remembering that wherever there is a divine promise there faith is required, and that these two are so necessary to each other that neither can be efficacious apart from the other. For it is not possible to believe unless there be a promise, and the promise is not established unless it be believed. But where these two meet, they give a real and most certain efficacy to the sacraments. Hence, to seek the efficacy of the sacrament apart from the promise and apart from faith, is to labor in vain and to find damnation. Thus Christ says: "He that believe and is baptised, shall be saved. He that does not believe shall be damned." He shows us in this word that faith is so necessary a part of the sacrament that it can save even without the sacrament. For which reason He did not see fit to say: "He that does not believe, and is not baptised..."

3.22 Baptism, then, signifies two things –death and resurrection – that is, full and complete justification. When the minister immerses the child in the water, baptism signifies death. When he draws the child forth again, baptism signifies life. Thus Paul expounds on this in Romans 6, "We are buried together with Christ by baptism into death. As Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life." This death and resurrection we call the new creation, regeneration, and the spiritual birth. And this must not be understood only in a figurative sense, of the death of sin and the life of grace, as many understand it, but of actual death and resurrection. The significance of baptism is not an imaginary significance, and sin does not completely die, nor does grace completely rise, until the body of sin that we carry about in this life is destroyed. This the Apostle teaches in the same chapter. For as long as we are in the flesh, the desires of the flesh stir and are stirred. When we begin to believe, we also begin to die to this world and to live to God in the life to come. Faith is truly a death and a resurrection, that is, it is that spiritual baptism in which we are submerged and from which we rise.

3.23 Hence it is indeed correct to say that baptism washes sins away, but that expression is too weak and mild to bring out the full significance of baptism, which is rather a symbol of death and resurrection. For this reason I would have the candidates for baptism completely immersed in the water, as the word says and as the sacrament signifies. Not that I deem this necessary, but it would be well to give to so perfect and complete a thing a perfect and complete sign. Thus it was also doubtless instituted by Christ. The sinner does not so much need to be washed as he needs to die, in order to be wholly renewed and made another creature, and to be conformed to the death and resurrection of Christ, with Whom, through baptism, he dies and rises again. Although you may properly say that Christ was washed clean of mortality when He died and rose again, yet that is a weaker way of putting it than if you said He was completely changed and renewed. In the same way it is far more forceful to say that baptism signifies that we die completely and rising to eternal life, than to say that it signifies merely our being washed clean from sins.

3.24 Here, again, you see that the sacrament of baptism, even in respect to its sign, does not last only for a moment, but continues on forever. Although its administration is soon over, yet the thing it signifies continues until we die, no, until we rise at the last day. For as long as we live we are continually doing that which our baptism signifies, that is, we die and rise again. We die, that is, not only spiritually and in our affections, by renouncing the sins and vanities of this world, but in reality we die. We begin to leave this bodily life and to lay hold on the life to come. So there is, as they say, a real and even a bodily leaving of this world to go to the Father.

3.25 We must, therefore, beware of those who have reduced the power of baptism, making it something thin and small. While they do say that baptism indeed pours the grace of God into us, but afterwards sin pours it out again. So, they say, one must reach heaven by another way. As if baptism had then become entirely useless! Do not hold such a viewpoint, but know that baptism signifies that you die and live again. Therefore, whether it is by penance or by any other way, you can only return to the power of your baptism, and once again do what you were baptised to do and what your baptism signified. Never does baptism lose its power, unless you despair and refuse to return to its salvation. You may, indeed, for a time wander away from the sign, but that does not mean that the sign is powerless. You have, thus, been baptised once in the sacrament, but you must be constantly baptised again through faith, you must constantly die, you must constantly live again. Baptisms absorbs your whole body, and gives it back again. Even so that which baptism signifies should absorb your whole life in body and soul, and give it back again at the last day, clothed in robes of glory and immortality. We are, therefore, never without the sign of baptism nor yet without the thing it signifies. No, we must be baptised ever more and more completely, until we perfectly fulfill the sign, at the last day.

3.26 Therefore, whatever we do in this life that promotes the mortifying of the flesh and the giving life to the spirit, belongs to baptism. The sooner we depart this life the sooner we fulfill our baptism. The greater our sufferings the more closely do we conform to our baptism. Hence those were the Church's happiest days, when the martyrs were being killed everyday and accounted as sheep for the slaughter. For then the power of baptism reigned supreme in the Church, which power we have today lost sight of in the midst of the multitude of works and doctrines of men. For all our life should be baptism, and the fulfilling of the sign, or sacrament, of baptism. We have been set free from all else and wholly given over to baptism alone, that is, to death and resurrection.

3.27 This glorious liberty of ours, and this understanding of baptism have been carried captive in our day. And whom have we to thank for this but the Roman pontiff with his despotism? More than all others, it was his first duty, as chief shepherd, to preach and defend this liberty and this knowledge, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4 "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries, or sacraments, of God." Instead of this, he seeks only to oppress us with his decrees and his laws, and to enslave and ensnare us in the tyranny of his power. By what right, in God's name, does the pope impose his laws upon us – to say nothing of his wicked and damnable neglect to teach these mysteries? Who gave him power to despoil us of this liberty, granted us in baptism? One thing only (as I have said) has been enjoined upon us all the days of our life – be baptised – That is, to be put to death and to live again, through faith in Christ. This faith alone should have been taught, especially by the chief shepherd. But now there is not a word said about faith, and the Church is laid waste with endless laws concerning works and ceremonies So the power and right understanding of baptism are put aside, and faith in Christ is prevented.

3.28 Therefore I say: neither the pope nor a bishop nor any other man has the right to impose a single syllable of law upon a Christian man without his consent. If he does, it is done in the spirit of tyranny. Therefore the prayers, fasts, donations, and whatever else the pope decrees and demands in all of his decretals, as numerous as they are evil, he demands and decrees without any right whatever. He sins against the liberty of the Church whenever he attempts any such thing. In fact, today's churchmen are indeed such vigorous defenders of the liberty of the Church, that is, of wood and stone, of land and rents – for "churchly" is nowadays the same as "spiritual" – yet with such fictions they not only take captive but utterly destroy the true liberty of the Church, and deal with us far worse than the Turk, in opposition to the word of the Apostle, "Do not be enslaved by men." Yes, to be subjected to their statutes and tyrannical laws is to be enslaved by men.

3.29 This impious and sinful tyranny is fostered by the pope's disciples, who here drag in and pervert that saying of Christ, "He that hears you hears me." With puffed cheeks they blow up this saying to a great size in support of their traditions. Though Christ said this to the apostles when they went forth to preach the Gospel, and though it applies solely to the Gospel, they pass over the Gospel and apply it only to their fables. He says in John 10 "My sheep hear my voice, but the voice of a stranger they do not hear." To this end He left us the Gospel, that His voice might be uttered by the pontiffs. But they utter their own voice, and themselves desire to be heard. Moreover, the Apostle says that he was not sent to baptise but to preach the Gospel. Therefore, no one is bound to the traditions of the pope, nor does he need to give ear to him unless he teaches the Gospel and Christ, and the pope should teach nothing but faith without any restrictions. But since Christ says, "He that hears you hears me," and does not say to Peter only, "He that hears you," why doesn't the pope also hear others? Finally, where there is true faith, there must also be the word of faith. Why then does not an unbelieving pope now and then hear a believing servant of his, who has the word of faith? It is blindness, sheer blindness, that holds the popes in their power.

3.30 But others, more shameless still, arrogantly ascribe to the pope the power to make laws, on the basis of Matthew 16, "Whatever you shall bind," etc., though Christ treats in this passage of binding and loosing sins, not of taking the whole Church captive and oppressing it with laws. So this tyranny treats everything with its own lying words and violently wrests and perverts the words of God. I admit indeed that Christians ought to bear this accursed tyranny just as they would bear any other violence of this world, according to Christ's word: " If someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn to him also the other cheek." But this is my complaint –that the godless pontiffs boastfully claim the right to do this, that they pretend to be seeking the Church's welfare with this Babylon of theirs, and that they foist this fiction upon all mankind. For if they did these things, and we suffered their violence, well knowing, both of us, that it was godlessness and tyranny, then we might number it among the things that contribute to the mortifying of this life and the fulfilling of our baptism, and might with a good conscience rejoice in the inflicted injury. But now they seek to deprive us of this consciousness of our liberty, and would have us believe that what they do is well done, and must not be censured or complained of as wrongdoing. Since they wolves, they want to look like shepherds. Since they are antichrists, they want to be honored as Christ.

3.31 I only lift my voice to defend this freedom of conscience. I confidently cry out: No one – not men – not angels – may justly impose laws upon Christians without their consent, for we are free from all things. If any laws are laid on us, we must bear them in such a way as to preserve the consciousness of our liberty. We must know and strongly affirm that the making of such laws is unjust, that we will bear and rejoice in this injustice. We will be careful neither to justify the tyrant nor complain against his tyranny. "For who is he," says Peter, "that will harm you, if you are followers of that which is good?" " All things work together for good to the elect." Nevertheless, since few know this glory of baptism and the blessedness of Christian liberty, and cannot know them because of the tyranny of the pope, I for one will walk away from it all and redeem my conscience by bringing this charge against the pope and all his papists: Unless they will abolish their laws and traditions, and restore to Christ's churches their liberty and have it taught among them, they are guilty of all the souls that perish under this miserable captivity, and the papacy is truly the kingdom of Babylon, yes, the kingdom of the real Antichrist! For who is " the man of sin" and "the son of perdition" but he that with his doctrines and his laws increases sins and the perdition of souls in the Church, while he sits in the Church as if he were God? All this the papal tyranny has fulfilled, and more than fulfilled, these many centuries. It has extinguished faith, obscured the sacraments and oppressed the Gospel. But its own laws, which are not only impious and sacrilegious, but even barbarous and foolish, it has enjoined and multiplied world without end.

3.32 Behold, then, our miserable captivity. How empty is the city that was full of people! The mistress of the Gentiles has become like a widow. The princess of provinces has been made a client nation! There is none to comfort her. All her friends despise her. There are so many orders, so many rites, so many sects, so many vows, exertions and works, in which Christians are engaged, that they lose sight of their baptism. This swarm of locusts, cankerworms and caterpillars – not one of them is able to remember that he is baptised or what blessings his baptism brought him. Are engaged in no efforts and no works, but are free in every way, secure and saved only through the glory of their baptism. For we are indeed little children, continually baptised anew in Christ.

3.33 Perhaps someone will oppose what I have said by pointing to the baptism of infants. Infants do not understand God's promise and cannot have baptismal faith. So either faith is not necessary or else infant baptism is useless. Here I say what everyone says: the faith of others, namely, the faith of those who bring them to baptism aids infants. For the Word of God is powerful, when it is uttered. It can change even a godless heart, which is no less unresponsive and helpless than any infant. Even so the infant is changed, cleansed and renewed by faith poured into it, through the prayer of the Church that presents it for baptism and believes. All things are possible for this prayer. Nor should I doubt that even a godless adult might be changed, in any of the sacraments, if the same Church prayed and presented him. We read in the Gospel of the paralytic, who was healed through the faith of others. I should be ready to admit that in this sense the sacraments of the New Law confer grace effectively, not only to those who do not resist, but even to those who do resist it very obstinately. Is there any obstacle that the faith of the Church and the prayer of faith cannot remove? We believe that Stephen by this powerful means converted Paul the Apostle, don't we? But then the sacraments accomplish what they do not by their own power, but by the power of faith, without which they accomplish nothing at all, as has been said.

3.34 The question remains, whether it is proper to baptise an infant not yet born, with only a hand or a foot outside the womb. Here I will decide nothing hastily, and confess my ignorance. I am not sure whether the reason given by some is sufficient – that the soul resides in its entirety in every part of the body. After all, it is not the soul but the body that is externally baptised with water. Nor do I share the view of others that he who is not yet born cannot be born again, even though it has considerable force. I leave these matters to the teaching of the Spirit. For the moment I permit every one to be convinced by his own opinion.

3.35 One thing I will add – and I wish I could persuade everyone to do it! – namely, to completely abolish or avoid all the making of vows, whether they are vows to enter religious orders, to make pilgrimages or to do any works whatsoever. Then we could remain in the freedom of our baptism, which is the most religious, rich in works, state of all. It is impossible to say how greatly that widespread delusion of vows weakens baptism and obscures the knowledge of Christian liberty. This is to say nothing now of the unspeakable and infinite peril to souls which that mania for making vows and that ill-advised rashness daily increase. Godless pontiffs and unhappy pastors! You slumber on without heeding, and indulge your evil lusts, without pity for this "affliction of Joseph," so dreadful and fraught with peril!

3.36 Vows should be abolished by a general edict, especially life-long vows, and all men diligently recalled to the vows of baptism. If this is not possible, everyone should be warned not to take a vow rashly. No one should be encouraged to do so. Permission to make vows should be given only with difficulty and reluctance. For we have vowed enough in baptism – more than we can ever fulfill. If we devote ourselves to the keeping of this one vow, we shall have all we can do. But now we travel over earth and sea to make many converts. We fill the world with priests, monks and nuns, and imprison them all in life-long vows. You will find those who argue and decree that a work done in fulfilment of a vow ranks higher than one done without a vow. They claim such works are rewarded with I know not what great rewards in heaven. Blind and godless Pharisees, who measure righteousness and holiness by the greatness, number or other quality of the works! But God measures them by faith alone, and with Him there is no difference between works except in the faith which performs them.

3.37 These wicked men inflate with bombast their own opinions and human works. They do this to lure the unthinking populace, who are almost always led by the glitter of works to make shipwreck of their faith, to forget their baptism and to harm their Christian liberty. For a vow is a kind of law or requirement. Therefore, when vows are multiplied, laws and works are necessarily multiplied. When this is done, faith is extinguished and the liberty of baptism taken captive. Others, not content with these wicked allurements, go on to say that entrance into a religious order is like a new baptism which may be repeated later and as often as the commitment to live the religious life is renewed. Thus these "votaries" have taken for themselves alone all righteousness, salvation and glory, and left to those who are merely baptised nothing to compare with them. No, the Pope of Rome, that fountain and source of all superstitions, confirms, approves and adorns this mode of life with high-sounding bulls and dispensations, while no one deems baptism worthy of even a thought. And with such glittering pomp (as we have said) they drive the easily led people of Christ into certain disaster, so that lose their gratitude for baptism and presume to achieve greater things by their works than others achieve by their faith.

3.38 Therefore, God again shows Himself perverse to the perverse. He repays the makers of vows for their ingratitude and pride, causes them to break their vows or to keep them only with prodigious labor. He compels them to remain sunk in these vows, never coming to the knowledge of the grace of faith and baptism. He makes them continue in their hypocrisy to the end – since God does not approve their spirit –and that at last makes them a laughing-stock to the whole world, always persuing righteousness, yet never achieving righteousness. God ordains all this so that they fulfill the word of Isaiah: " The land is full of idols."

3.39 I am indeed far from forbidding or discouraging any one who may desire to take a vow privately and of his own free choice; for I would not altogether despise and condemn vows. But I would most strongly advise against setting up and sanctioning the making of vows as a public mode of life. It is enough that every one should have the private right to take a vow at his peril; but to commend the vowing of vows as a public mode of life – this I hold to be most harmful to the Church and to simple souls. And I hold this, first, because it runs directly counter to the Christian life; for a vow is a certain ceremonial law and a human tradition or presumption, and from these the Christian has been set free through baptism. For a Christian is subject to no laws but the law of God. Again, there is no instance in Scripture of such a vow, especially of life-long chastity, obedience and poverty. But whatever is without warrant of Scripture is hazardous and should by no means be commended to any one, much less established as a common and public mode of life, although whoever will must be permitted to make the venture at his own peril. For certain works are wrought by the Spirit in a few men, but they must not be made an example or a mode of life for all.

3.40 Moreover, I greatly fear that these modes of life of the religious orders belong to those things which the Apostle foretold: " They shall teach a lie in hypocrisy, forbidding to marry, to abstain from meats, which God has created to be received with thanksgiving." Let no one retort by pointing to Sts. Bernard, Francis, Dominic and others, who founded or fostered monastic orders. Terrible and marvelous is God in His counsels toward the sons of men. He could keep Daniel, Ananias, Azarias and Misael holy at the court of the king of Babylon, that is, in the midst of godlessness; why could He not sanctify those men also in their perilous mode of living or guide them by the special operation of His Spirit, yet without desiring it to be an example to others? Besides, it is certain that none of them was saved through his vows and his "religious" life; they were saved through faith alone, by which all men are saved, and with which that splendid slavery of vows is more than anything else in conflict.

3.41 But every one may hold to his own view of this. I will return to my argument. Speaking now in behalf of the Church's liberty and the glory of baptism, I feel myself in duty bound publicly to set forth the counsel I have learned under the Spirit's guidance. I therefore counsel the magnates of the churches, first of all, to abolish all those vows, or at least not to approve and extol them. If they will not do this, then I counsel all men who would be assured of their salvation, to abstain from all vows, above all from the great and life-long vows; I give this counsel especially to all growing boys and youths. This I do, first, because this manner of life has no witness or warrant in the Scriptures, as I have said, but is puffed up solely by the bulls (and they truly are "bulls") of human popes. And, secondly, because it greatly tends to hypocrisy, by reason of its outward show and its unusual character, which engender conceit and a contempt of the common Christian life. And if there were no other reason for abolishing these vows, this one were reason enough, namely, that through them faith and baptism are slighted and works are exalted, which cannot be done without harmful results. For in the religious orders there is scarce one in many thousands, who is not more concerned about works than about faith, and on the basis of this madness they have even made distinctions among themselves, such as "the more strict" and "the more lax," as they call them.

3.42 Therefore I advise no one to enter any religious order or the priesthood – no, I dissuade everyone – unless he be forearmed with this knowledge and understand that the works of monks and priests, be they never so holy and arduous, differ no whit in the sight of God from the works of the rustic toiling in the field or the woman going about her household tasks, but that all works are measured before Him by faith alone; as Jeremiah says: " O Lord, thine eyes are upon faith"; and Ecclesiasticus: " In every work of thine regard your soul in faith: for this is the keeping of the commandments." no, he should know that the menial housework of a maidservant or manservant is ofttimes more acceptable to God than all the fastings and other works of a monk or a priest, because the latter lacks faith. Since, therefore, vows seem to tend nowadays only to the glorification of works and to pride, it is to be feared that there is nowhere less of faith and of the Church than among the priests, monks and bishops, and that these men are in truth heathen or hypocrites, who imagine themselves to be the Church or the heart of the Church, and "spiritual," and the Church's leaders, when they are everything else but that. And it is to be feared that this is indeed " the people of the captivity," among whom all things freely given us in baptism are held captive, while "the people of the earth" are left behind in poverty and in small numbers, and, as is the lot of married folk, appear vile in their eyes.

3.43 From what has been said we learn that the Roman pontiff is guilty of two glaring errors.

3.44 In the first place, he grants dispensations from vows, and does it as though he alone of all Christians possessed this authority; such is the temerity and audacity of wicked men. If it be possible to grant a dispensation from a vow, then any brother may grant one to his neighbour or even to himself. But if one's neighbour cannot grant a dispensation, neither can the pope by any right. For from this has he his authority? From the power of the keys? But the keys belong to all, and avail only for sins (Matthew 18:15). Now they themselves claim that vows are "of divine right." Why then does the pope deceive and destroy the poor souls of men by granting dispensations in matters of divine right, in which no dispensations can be granted? He babbles indeed, in the section "Of vows and their redemption," of having the power to change vows, just as in the law the firstborn of an ass was changed for a sheep (Exodus 13:13) – if the firstborn of an ass, and the vow he commands to be everywhere and always offered, were one and the same thing, or as if when God decrees in His law that a sheep shall be changed for an ass, the pope, a mere man, may immediately claim the same power, not in his own law but in God's! It was not a pope, but an ass changed for a pope, that made this decretal; so egregiously senseless and godless is it.

3.45 The other error is this. The pope decrees, on the other hand, that marriage is dissolved if one party enter a monastery even without the consent of the other, provided the marriage be not yet consummated. Grammercy, what devil puts such monstrous things into the pope's mind! God commands men to keep faith and not break their word to one another, and again, to do good with that which is their own; for He hates "robbery in a holocaust," as he says by the mouth of Isaiah. (Isaiah 61:8) But one spouse is bound by the marriage contract to keep faith with the other, and he is not his own. He cannot break his faith by any right, and whatever he does with himself is robbery if it be without the other's consent. Why does not one who is burdened with debts follow this same rule and obtain admission to an order, so as to be released from his debts and be free to break his word? O more than blind! Which is greater; the faith commanded by God or a vow devised and chosen by man? you art a shepherd of souls, O pope? And ye that teach such things are doctors of sacred theology? Why then do ye teach them? Because, forsooth, ye have decked out your vow as a better work than marriage, and do not exalt faith, which alone exalts all things, but ye exalt works, which are nothing in the sight of God, or which are all alike so far as any merit is concerned.

3.46 I have no doubt, therefore, that neither men nor angels can grant a dispensation from vows, if they be proper vows. But I am not fully clear in my own mind whether all the things that men nowadays vow come under the head of vows. For instance, it is simply foolish and stupid for parents to dedicate their children, before birth or in early infancy , to "the religious life," or to perpetual chastity; no, it is certain that this can by no means be termed a vow. It seems a mockery of God to vow things which it is not at all in one's power to keep. As to the triple vow of the monastic orders, the longer I consider it, the less I comprehend it, and I marvel from this the custom of exacting this vow has arisen. Still less do I understand at what age vows may be taken in order to be legal and valid. I am pleased to find them unanimously agreed that vows taken before the age of puberty are not valid. Nevertheless, they deceive many young children who are ignorant both of their age and of what they are vowing; they do not observe the age of puberty in receiving such children, who after making their profession are held captive and devoured by a troubled conscience, as though they had afterward given their consent. As if a vow which was invalid could afterward become valid with the lapse of time.

3.47 It seems absurd to me that the terms of a legal vow should be prescribed to others by those who cannot prescribe them for themselves. Nor do I see why a vow taken at eighteen years of age should be valid, and not one taken at ten or twelve years. It will not do to say that at eighteen a man feels his carnal desires. How is it when he scarcely feels them at twenty or thirty, or when he feels them more keenly at thirty than at twenty? Why do they not also set a certain age-limit for the vows of poverty and obedience? But at what age will you say a man should feel his greed and pride? Even the most spiritual hardly become aware of these emotions. Therefore, no vow will ever become binding and valid until we have become spiritual, and no longer have any need of vows. You see, these are uncertain and perilous matters, and it would therefore be a wholesome counsel to leave such lofty modes of living, unhampered by vows, to the Spirit alone, as they were of old, and by no means to change them into a rule binding for life.

3.48 But let this suffice for the present concerning baptism and its liberty; in due time I may discuss the vows at greater length. Of a truth they stand sorely in need of it.

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

4.1 We come in the third place to the sacrament of penance. On this subject I have already given no little offense by my published treatise and disputations, in which I have amply set forth my views. These I must now briefly rehearse, in order to unmask the tyranny that is rampant here no less than in the sacrament of the bread. For because these two sacraments furnish opportunity for gain and profit, the greed of the shepherds rages in them with incredible zeal against the flock of Christ; although baptism, too, has sadly declined among adults and become the servant of avarice, as we have just seen in our discussion of vows.

4.2 This is the first and chief abuse of this sacrament: They have utterly abolished the sacrament itself, so that there is not a vestige of it left. For they have overthrown both the word of divine promise and our faith, in which this as well as other sacraments consists. They have applied to their tyranny the word of promise which Christ speak in Matthew 16:19, "Whatsoever you shall bind," etc., in Matthew 18:18, " Whatsoever ye shall bind," etc., and in John, the last chapter, (John 20:23) "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them," etc. In these words the faith of penitents is aroused, to the obtaining of remission of sins. But in all their writing, teaching and preaching their sole concern has been, not to teach Christians what is promised in these words, or what they ought to believe and what great comfort they might find in them, but only to extend their own tyranny far and wide through force and violence, until it has come to such a pass that some of them have begin to command the very angels in heaven and to boast in incredible mad wickedness of having in these words obtained the right to a heavenly and an earthly rule, and of possessing the power to bind even in heaven. Thus they say nothing of the saving faith of the people, but babble only of the despotic power of the pontiffs, while Christ speaks not at all of power, but only of faith.

4.3 For Christ has not ordained principalities or powers or lordships, but ministries, in the Church; as we learn from the Apostle, who says.: " Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God." (1 Corinthians 4:1) Now when He said: " He that believe and is baptised shall be saved," (Mark 16:16) He called forth the faith of those to be baptised, so that by this word of promise a man might be certain of being saved if he believed and was baptised. In that word there is no impartation of any power whatever, but only the institution of the ministry of those who baptise. Similarly, when He says here: "Whatsoever you shall bind," etc., (Matthew 16:19) He calls forth the faith of the penitent, so that by this word of promise he may be certain of being truly absolved in heaven, if he be absolved and believe. Here there is no mention at all of power, but of the ministry of him that absolves, it is a wonder these blind and arrogant men missed the opportunity of arrogating a despotic power to themselves from the promise of baptism. But if they do not do this in the case of baptism, why should they have presumed to do it in the case of the promise of penance? For in both there is a like ministry, a similar promise, and the same kind of sacrament. So that, if baptism does not belong to Peter alone, it is undeniably a wicked usurpation of power to claim the keys for the pope alone. Again, when Christ says: "Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Take, drink; this is the chalice in my blood," (1 Corinthians 11:24 f.) etc., He calls forth the faith of those who eat, so that through these words their conscience may be strengthened by faith and they may rest assured of receiving the forgiveness of sins, if they have eaten. Here, too, He says nothing of power, but only of a ministry.

4.4 Thus the promise of baptism remains in some sort, at least to infants; the promise of bread and the cup has been destroyed and made subservient to greed, faith becoming a work and the testament a sacrifice; while the promise of penance has fallen prey to the most oppressive despotism of all and serves to establish a more than temporal rule.

4.5 Not content with these things, this Babylon of ours has so completely extinguished faith that it insolently denies its necessity in this sacrament; no, with the wickedness of Antichrist: it calls it heresy if any one should assert its necessity. What more could this tyranny do that it has not done? (Isaiah 5:4) Verily, by the rivers of Babylon we sit and weep, when we remember you, O Zion. (Psalm 137:1, 2) We hang our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. The Lord curse the barren willows of those streams! Amen.

4.6 Now let us see what they have put in the place of the promise and the faith which they have blotted out and overthrown. Three parts have they made of penance – contrition, confession, and satisfaction; yet so as to destroy whatever of good there might be in any of them and to establish here also their covetousness and tyranny.

4.7 In the first place, they teach that contrition precedes faith in the promise; they hold it, much too cheap, making it not a work of faith, but a merit; no, they do not mention it at all. So deep are they sunk in works and in those instances of Scripture that show how many obtained grace by reason of their contrition and humility of heart; but they take no account of the faith which wrought such contrition and sorrow of heart, as it is written of the men of Nineveh in Jonah 3:5, "And the men of Nineveh believed in God: and they proclaimed a fast," etc. Others, again, more bold and wicked, have invented a so-called "attrition," which is, converted into contrition by virtue of the power of the keys, of which they know nothing. This attrition they grant to the wicked and unbelieving and thus abolish contrition altogether. O the intolerable wrath of God, that such things should be taught in the Church of Christ! Thus, with both faith and its work destroyed, we go on secure in the doctrines and opinions of men – yes, we go on to our destruction. A contrite heart is a precious thing, but it is found only where there is a lively faith in the promises and the threats of God. Such faith, intent on the immutable truth of God, startles and terrifies the conscience and thus renders it contrite, and afterwards, when it is contrite, raises it up, consoles and preserves it; so that the truth of God's threatening is the cause of contrition, and the truth of His, promise the cause of consolation, if it be believed. By such faith a man merits the forgiveness of sins. Therefore faith should be taught and aroused before all else; and when faith is obtained, contrition and consolation will follow inevitably and of themselves.

4.8 Therefore, although there is something of truth in their teaching that contrition is to be attained by what they call the recollection and contemplation of sins, yet their teaching is perilous and perverse so long as they do not teach first of all the beginning and cause of contrition – the immutable truth of God's threatening and promise, to the awakening of faith – so that men may learn to pay more heed to the truth of God, whereby they are cast down and lifted up, than to the multitude of their sins, which will rather irritate and increase the sinful desires than lead to contrition, if they be regarded apart from the truth of God. I will say nothing now of the intolerable burden they have bound upon us with their demand that we should frame a contrition for every sin. That is impossible; we can know only the smaller part of our sins, and even our good works are found to be sins, according to Psalm 143:2, "Enter not into judgement with your servant; for in your sight shall no man living be justified." It is enough to lament the sins which at the present moment distress our conscience, as well as those which we can readily call to mind. Whoever is in this frame of mind is without doubt ready to grieve and fear for all his sins, and will do so whenever they are brought to his knowledge in the future.

4.9 Beware, then, of putting your trust, in your own contrition and of ascribing the forgiveness of sins to your own sorrow. God does not have respect to you because of that, but because of the faith by which you have believed His threatenings and promises, and which wrought such sorrow within you. Thus we owe whatever of good there may be in our penance, not to our scrupulous enumeration of sins, but to the truth of God and to our faith. All other things are the works and fruits of this, which follow of their own accord, and do not make a man good, but are done by a man already made good through faith in the truth of God. Even so, "a smoke goeth up in His wrath, because He is angry and troubleth the mountains and kindleth them," as it is said in Psalm 18:8. First comes the terror of His threatening, which burns; up the wicked, then faith, accepting this, sends up the cloud of contrition, etc.

4.10 Contrition, however, is less exposed to tyranny and gain than wholly given over to wickedness and pestilent teaching. But confession and satisfaction have become the chief workshop of greed and violence.

4.11 Let us first take up confession.

4.12 There is no doubt that confession is necessary and commanded of God. Thus we read in Matthew (Matthew 3:6) "They were baptised of John in Jordan, confessing their sins." And in 1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." If the saints may not deny their sin, how much more ought those who are guilty of open and great sins to make confession! But most effectively of all does Matthew 18:15 prove, the institution of confession, in which passage Christ teaches that a sinning brother should be rebuked, haled before, the Church, accused, and, if he will not hear, excommunicated. But he hears when, heeding the rebuke, he acknowledges and confesses his sin.

4.13 Of private confession, which is now observed, I am hearty in favor, even though, it cannot be proved from the Scriptures; it is useful and necessary, nor would I have it abolished – no, I rejoice that it exists in the Church of Christ, for it is a cure without an equal for distressed consciences. For when we have laid bare our conscience to our brother and privately made known to him the evil that lurked within, we receive from our brother's lips the word of comfort spoken by God Himself; and, if we accept it in faith, we find peace in the mercy of God speaking to us through our brother. This alone do I abominate – that this confession has been subjected to the despotism and extortion of the pontiffs. They reserve to themselves, even hidden sins, and command that they be made known to confessors named by them, only to trouble the consciences of men. They merely play the pontiff, while they utterly despise the true duties of pontiffs, which are to preach the Gospel and to care for the poor. yes, the godless despots leave the great sins to the plain priests, and reserve to themselves those sins only which are of less consequence, such as those ridiculous and fictitious things in the bull Coenadoinini. no, to make the wickedness of their error the more apparent, they not only do not reserve, but actually teach and approve, the sins, against the service of God, against faith and the chief commandments; such as their running on pilgrimages, the perverse worship of the saints, the lying saints'? legends, the various forms of trust in works and ceremonies, and the practicing of them, by all of which faith in God is extinguished and idolatry encouraged, as we see in our day. We have the same kind of priests today as Jereboam ordained of old in Dan and Beersheba,(1 Kings 12:26 ff.) ministers of the golden calves, men who are ignorant of the law of God, of faith and of whatever pertains to the feeding of Christ's sheep, and who inculcate in the people nothing but their own inventions with terror and violence.

4.14 Although my advice is that we bear this outrage of reserved cases, even as Christ bids us bear all the tyranny of men, and teaches us that we must obey these extortioners; nevertheless I deny that they have the right to make such reservations, nor do I believe they can bring one dot of an I or cross of a T of proof that they have it. But I am going to prove the contrary. In the first place, Christ, speaking in Matthew 18:15 of open sins, says that if our brother shall hear us when we rebuke him, we have saved the soul of our brother, and that he is to be brought before the Church only if he refuse to hear us; so that his sin may be corrected among brethren. How much more will it be true of hidden sins, that they are forgiven if one brother freely makes confession to another? So that it is not necessary to tell it to the Church, that is, as these babblers interpret it, the prelate or priest. We have another proof of this in Christ's words in the same chapter: "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 18:18) For this is said to each and every Christian. Again, He says in the same place: "Again I say to you, that if two of you shall consent upon earth, concerning anything whatsoever that they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 18:19) Now, the brother who lays his hidden sins before his brother and craves pardon, certainly consents with his brother upon earth in the truth, which is Christ. Of which Christ says yet more clearly, confirming His preceding words: "Verily I say to you, where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew18:20)

4.15 Hence. I have no doubt but that every one is absolved from his hidden sins when he has made confession, either of his own accord or after being rebuked, has sought pardon and amended his ways, privately before any brother, however much the violence of the pontiffs may rage against it; for Christ has given to every one of His believers the power to absolve even open sins. Add yet this little point: If any reservation of hidden. sins were valid, so that one could not be saved unless they were forgiven, then a man's salvation would be prevented most of all by those aforementioned good works and idolatries, which are nowadays taught by the popes. But if these most grievous sins do not prevent one's salvation, how foolish it is to reserve those lighter sins! Verily, it is the foolishness and blindness of the pastors that produce these monstrous things in the Church. Therefore I would admonish these princes of Babylon and bishops of Bethaven (Hosea 4:15; Hosea 10:5) to refrain from reserving any cases whatsoever. Let them, moreover, permit all brothers and sisters freely to hear the confession of hidden sins, so that the sinner may make his sins known to whomever he will and seek pardon and comfort, that is, the word of Christ, by the mouth of his neighbor. For with these presumptions of theirs they only ensnare the consciences of the weak without necessity, establish their wicked despotism, and fatten their avarice on the sins and ruin of their brethren. Thus they stain their hands with the blood of souls, sons are devoured by their parents, Ephraim devours Juda, and Syria Israel with open mouth, as Isaiah said. (Isaiah 9:20)

4.16 To these evils they have added the " circumstances," and also the mothers, daughters, sisters, brothers-and sisters-in-law, branches and fruits of sins; since, forsooth, astute and idle men have worked out a kind of family tree of relationships and affinities even among sins so prolific is wickedness coupled with ignorance. For this conceit, whatever rogue be its author, has like many another become a public law. Thus do the shepherds keep watch over the Church of Christ; whatever new work or superstition those stupid devotees may have dreamed of, they immediately drag to the light of day, deck out with indulgences and safeguard with bulls; so far are they from suppressing it and preserving to God's people the true faith and liberty. For what has our liberty to do with the tyranny of Babylon?

4.17 My advice would be to ignore all circumstances utterly. With Christians there is only one circumstance – that a brother has sinned. For there is no person to be compared with a Christian brother. And the observance of places, times, days, persons, and all other superstitious moonshine, only magnifies the things that are nothing, to the injury of those which are everything; as if aught could be greater or of more importance than the glory of Christian brotherhood! Thus they bind us to places, days and persons, that the name of brother may be lightly esteemed, and we may serve in bondage instead of being free – we to whom all days, places, persons, and all external things are one and the same.

4.18 How unworthily they have dealt with satisfaction, I have abundantly shown in the controversies concerning indulgences. They have grossly abused it, to the ruin of Christians in body and soul. To begin with, they taught it in such a manner that the people never learned what satisfaction really is, namely, the renewal of a man's life. Then, they so continually harp on it and emphasize its necessity, that they leave no room for faith in Christ. With these scruples they torture poor consciences to death, and one runs to Rome, one to this place, another to that, this one to Chartreuse, that one to some other place, one scourges himself with rods, another ruins his body with fasts and vigils, and all cry with the same mad zeal, "Lo here is Christ! lo there!" (Luke 17:20f.) believing that the kingdom of heaven, which is within us, will come with observation. For these monstrous things we are indebted to you, O Roman See, and thy murderous laws and ceremonies, with which you hast corrupted all mankind, so that they think by works to make satisfaction for sin to God, Who can be satisfied only by the faith of a contrite heart! This faith thou not only keepest silent with this uproar of thine, but even oppressest, only so your insatiable horseleech have those to whom it may say, "Bring, bring!" and may traffic in sins. (Proverbs 30:15)

4.19 Some have gone even farther and have constructed those instruments for driving souls to despair – their decrees that the penitent must rehearse all sins anew for which he neglected to make the imposed satisfaction. Yes, what would not they venture to do, who were born for the sole purpose of carrying all things into a tenfold captivity? Moreover, how many are possessed with the notion that they are in a saved state and are making satisfaction for their sins, if they but mumble over, word for word, the prayers the priest has imposed, even though they give never a thought meanwhile to amending their life! They believe that their life is changed in the one moment of contrition and confession, and it remains only to make satisfaction for their past sins. How should they know better, when they are not taught otherwise? No thought is given here to the mortifying of the flesh, no value is attached to the example of Christ, Who absolved the woman taken in adultery and said to her, "Go, and sin no more!" (John 8:11) thereby laying upon her the cross – the mortifying of her flesh. This perverse error is greatly encouraged by our absolving sinners before the satisfaction has been completed, so that they are more concerned about completing the satisfaction which lies before them, than they are about contrition, which they suppose to be past and over when they have made confession. Absolution ought rather to follow on the completion of satisfaction, as it did in the ancient Church, with the result that, after completing the work, penitents gave themselves with greater diligence to faith and the living of a new life.

4.20 But this must suffice in repetition of what I have more fully said on indulgences, and in general this must suffice for the present concerning the three sacraments, which have been treated, and yet not treated, in so many harmful books, theological as well as juristic. It remains to attempt some discussion of the other sacraments also, lest I seem to have rejected them without cause.

CONFIRMATION

5.1 I wonder what could have possessed them to make a sacrament of confirmation out of the laying on of hands, (Mark 16:18; Acts 6:6, Acts 8:17, Acts 19:6) which Christ employed when He blessed young children, (Mark 10:16) and the apostles when they imparted the Holy Spirit, ordained elders and cured the sick, as the Apostle writes to Timothy, "Lay hands suddenly on no man." (1 Timothy 5:22) Why have they not also turned the sacrament of the bread into confirmation? For it is written in Acts 9:19, "And when he had taken meat he was strengthened," and in Psalm 104:15, "And that bread may cheer man's heart." Confirmation would thus include three sacraments – the bread, ordination, and confirmation itself. But if everything the apostles did is a sacrament, why have they not rather made preaching a sacrament?

5.2 I do not say this because I condemn the seven sacraments, but because I deny that they can be proved from the Scriptures. Would to God we had in the Church such a laying on of hands as there was in apostolic times, whether we called it confirmation or healing! But there is nothing left of it now but what we ourselves have invented to adorn the office of the bishops, that they may have at least something to do in the Church. For after they relinquished to their inferiors those arduous sacraments together with the Word, as being too common for themselves – since, forsooth, whatever the divine Majesty has instituted has to be despised of men – it was no more than right that we should discover something easy and not too burdensome for such delicate and great heroes to do, and should by no means entrust it to the lower clergy as something common – for whatever human wisdom has decreed has to be held in honor among men! Therefore, as are the priests, so let their ministry and duty be. For a bishop who does not preach the Gospel or care for souls, what is he but an idol in the world, having but the name and appearance of a bishop? (1 Corinthians 8:4) But we seek, instead of this, sacraments that have been divinely instituted, among which we see no reason for numbering confirmation. For, in order that there be a sacrament, there is required above all things a word of divine promise, whereby faith, may be trained. But we read nowhere that Christ ever gave a promise concerning confirmation, although He laid hands on many and included the laying on of hands among the signs in Mark 16:18 "They shall lay their hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Yet no one referred this to a sacrament, nor can this be done.

5.3 Hence it is sufficient to regard confirmation as a certain churchly rite or sacramental ceremony, similar to other ceremonies, such as the blessing of holy water and the like. For if every other creature is sanctified by the word and by prayer, (1 Timothy 4:4 f.) why should not much rather man be sanctified by the same means? Still, these things cannot be called sacraments of faith, because there is no divine promise connected with them, neither do they save; but sacraments do save those who believe the divine promise.

MARRIAGE

6.1 Not only is marriage regarded as a sacrament without the least warrant of Scripture, but the very traditions which extol it as a sacrament have turned it into a farce. Let me explain.

6.2 We said that there is in every sacrament a word of divine promise, to be believed by whoever receives the sign, and that the sign alone cannot be a sacrament. Now we read nowhere that the man who marries a wife receives any grace of God. no, there is not even a divinely instituted sign in marriage, or nowhere do we read that marriage was instituted by God to be a sign of anything. To be sure, whatever takes place in a visible manner may be regarded as a type or figure of something invisible; but types and figures are not sacraments in the sense in which we use this term.

6.3 Furthermore, since marriage existed from the beginning of the world and is still found among unbelievers, it cannot possibly be called a sacrament of the New Law and the exclusive possession of the Church. The marriages of the ancients were no less sacred than are ours, nor are those of unbelievers less true marriages than those of believers, and yet they are not regarded, as sacraments. Besides, there are even among believers married folk who are wicked and worse than any heathen; why should marriage be called a sacrament in their case and not among the heathen? Or are we going to rant so foolishly of baptism and the Church as to hold that marriage is a sacrament only in the Church, just as some make the mad claim that temporal power exists only in the Church? That is childish and foolish talk, by which we expose our ignorance and our arrogance to the ridicule of unbelievers.

6.4 But they will say: The Apostle writes in Ephesians 5:31, "They shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament." Surely you are not going to contradict so plain a statement of the Apostle! I reply: This argument, like the others, betrays great shallowness and a negligent and thoughtless reading of Scripture. Nowhere in Holy Scripture is this word sacrament employed in the meaning to which we are accustomed; it has an entirely different meaning. For wherever it occurs it signifies not the sign of a sacred thing, but a sacred, secret, hidden thing. Thus Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 4:1, "Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ, and dispensers of the mysteries – i.e., sacraments – of God." Where we have the word sacrament the Greek text reads mystery, which word our version sometimes translates and sometimes retains in its Greek form. Thus our verse reads in the Greek: "They Shall be two in one flesh; this is a great mystery." (Ephesians 5:31 f.) This explains how they came to find a sacrament of the New Law here – a thing they would never have done if they had read the word "mystery", as it is in the Greek.

6.5 Thus Christ Himself is called a sacrament in 1 Timothy 3:16, "And evidently great is the sacrament – i.e., mystery – of godliness, which was manifested in the flesh, was justified in the spirit, appeared to angels, has been preached to the Gentiles, is believed, by the world, is taken up in glory." Why have they not drawn out of this passage an eighth sacrament of the New Law, since they have the clear authority of Paul? But if they restrained themselves here, where they had a most excellent opportunity to unearth a new sacrament, why are they so wanton in the former passage? It was their ignorance, forsooth, of both words and things; they clung to the mere sound of the words, no, to their own fancies. For, having once arbitrarily taken the word sacrament to mean a sign, they immediately, without thought or scruple, made a sign of it every time they came upon it in the Sacred Scriptures. Such new meanings of words and such human customs they have also elsewhere dragged into Holy Writ, and conformed it to their dreams, making anything out of any passage whatsoever. Thus they continually chatter nonsense about the terms: good and evil works, sin, grace, righteousness, virtue, and well-nigh every one of the fundamental words and things. For they employ them all after their own arbitrary judgment, learned from the writings of men, to the detriment both of the truth of God and of our salvation.

6.6 Therefore, sacrament, or mystery, in Paul's writings, is that wisdom of the Spirit, hidden in a mystery, as he says in 1 Corinthians 2, which is Christ, Who is for this very reason not known to the princes of this world, wherefore they also crucified Him, and Who still is to them foolishness, an offense, a stone of stumbling, and a sign which is spoken against. (1 Corinthians 1:23; Romans 9:33; Luke 2:34; 1 Corinthians 1:23 f., 1 Corinthians 4:1) The preachers he calls dispensers of these mysteries because they preach Christ, the power and the wisdom of God, yet so that one cannot receive this unless one believe. Therefore, a sacrament is a mystery, or secret thing, which is set forth in words and is received by the faith of the heart. Such a sacrament is spoken of in the verse before us – "They shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament" (Ephesians 5:31 f.) – which they understand as spoken of marriage, while Paul wrote these words of Christ and the Church, and clearly explained his meaning by adding, "But I speak in Christ and in the Church." Yes, how well they agree with Paul! He declares he is setting forth a great sacrament in Christ and the Church, but they set it forth in a man and a woman! If such wantonness be permitted in the Sacred Scriptures, it is small wonder if one find there anything one please, even a hundred sacraments.

6.7 Christ and the Church are, therefore, a mystery, that is, a great and secret thing, which it was possible and proper to represent by marriage as by a certain outward allegory, but that was no reason for their calling marriage a sacrament. The heavens are a type of the apostles, as Psalm 19:1 declares; the sun is a type of Christ; the waters, of the peoples; but that does not make those things sacraments, for in every case there are lacking both the divine institution and the divine promise, which constitute a sacrament.

6.8 Hence Paul, in Ephesians 5, following his own mind, applies to Christ these words in Genesis 2 about marriage, or else, following the general view, he teaches that the spiritual marriage of Christ is also contained therein, saying: "As Christ cherisheth the Church: because we are members, of his body, of his flesh and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament; I speak in Christ and in the Church." You see, he would have the whole passage apply to Christ, and is at pains to admonish the reader to find the sacrament in Christ and the Church, and not in marriage.

6.9 Therefore we grant that marriage is a type of Christ and the Church, and a sacrament, yet not divinely instituted but invented by men in the Church, carried away by their ignorance both of the word and of the thing. Which ignorance, since it does not conflict with the faith, is to be charitably borne with, just as many other practices of human weakness and ignorance are borne with in the Church, so long as they do not conflict with the faith and with the Word of God. But we are now dealing with the certainty and purity of the faith and the Scriptures; so that our faith be not exposed to ridicule, when after affirming that a certain thing is contained in the Sacred Scriptures and in the articles of our faith, we are refuted and shown that it is not contained therein, and, being found ignorant of our own affairs, become a stumbling block to our opponents and to the weak; no, that we destroy not the authority of the Holy Scriptures. For those things which have been delivered to us by God in the Sacred Scriptures must be sharply distinguished from those that have been invented by men in the Church, it matters not how eminent they be for saintliness and scholarship.

6.10 Thus far concerning marriage itself.

6.11 But what shall we say of the wicked laws of men by which this divinely ordained manner of life is ensnared and tossed back and forth? Good God! it is dreadful, to contemplate the audacity of the Roman despots, who want only tear marriages asunder and again force them together. I ask you, is mankind given over to the wantonness of these men, for them to mock and in every way abuse and make of them whatever they please, for filthy lucre's sake?

6.12 There is circulating far and wide and enjoying a great reputation, a book whose contents have been poured together out of the cesspool of all human traditions, and whose title is, "The Angelic Sum," though it ought rather to be "The More than Devilish Sum." Among endless other monstrosities, which are supposed to instruct the confessors, while they most mischievously confuse them, there are enumerated in this book eighteen hindrances to marriage. you will examine these with the just and unprejudiced eye of faith, you will see that they belong to those things which the Apostle foretold: "There shall be those that give heed to spirits of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, forbidding to marry." (1 Timothy 4:1 ff.) What is forbidding to marry if it is not this – to invent all those hindrances and set those snares, in order to prevent men from marrying or, if they be married, to annul their marriage? Who gave this power to men? Granted that they were holy men and impelled by godly zeal, why should another's holiness disturb my liberty? why should another's zeal take me captive? Let whoever will, be a saint and a zealot, and to his heart's content; only let him not bring harm upon another, and let him not rob me of my liberty!

6.13 Yet I am glad that those shameful laws have at length attained to their full measure of glory, which is this: the Romanists of our day have through them become merchants. What is it they sell? The shame of men and women – merchandise, forsooth, most worthy of such merchants grown altogether filthy and obscene through greed and godlessness. For there is nowadays no hindrance that may not be legalised upon the intercession of mammon, so that these laws of men seem to have sprung into existence for the sole purpose of serving those grasping and robbing Nimrods as snares for taking money and as nets for catching souls, and in order that that "abomination" might stand "in the holy place," (Matthew 24:15) the Church of God, and openly sell to men the shame of either sex, or as the Scriptures say, "shame and nakedness," (Leviticus 18:6) of which they had previously robbed them by means of their laws. O worthy trade for our pontiffs to ply, instead of the ministry of the Gospel, which in their greed and pride they despise, being delivered up to a reprobate sense with utter shame and infamy. (Romans 1:28)

6.14 But what shall I say or do? If I enter into details, the treatise will grow to inordinate length, for everything is in such dire confusion one does not know where to begin, whither to go on, or where to leave off. I know that no state is well governed by means of laws. If the magistrate be wise, he will rule more prosperously by natural bent than by laws. If he be not wise, he will but further the evil by means of laws; for he will not know what use to make of the laws nor how to adapt them to the individual case. More stress ought, therefore, to be laid, in civil affairs, on putting good and wise men in office than on making laws; for such men will themselves be the very best laws, and will judge every variety of case with lively justice. And if there be knowledge of the divine law combined with natural wisdom, then written laws will be entirely superfluous and harmful. Above all, love needs no laws whatever.

6.15 Nevertheless I will say and do what I can. I admonish and pray all priests and brethren, when they encounter any hindrance from which the pope can grant dispensation and which is not expressly contained in the Scriptures, by all means to confirm any marriage that may have been contracted in any way contrary to the ecclesiastical or pontifical laws. But let them arm themselves with the divine law, which says, "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder." (Matthew 19:6) For the joining together of a man and a woman is of divine law and is binding, however it may conflict with the laws of men; the laws of men must give way before it without hesitation. For if a man leaves father and mother and cleaves to his wife, how much more will he tread underfoot the silly and wicked laws of men, in order to cleave to his wife! And if pope, bishop or official annul any marriage because it was contracted contrary to the laws of men, he is antichrist, he does violence to nature, and is guilty of lese-majesty toward God, because this word stands – "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder." (Matthew 19:6)

6.16 Besides this, no man had the right to frame such laws, and Christ has granted to Christians a liberty which is above all laws of men, especially where a law of God conflicts with them. Thus it is said in Mark 2, "The Son of man is lord also of the Sabbath," and, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." (Mark 2:27)Moreover, such laws were condemned beforehand by Paul, when he foretold that there would be men forbidding to marry. (1 Timothy 4:3) Here, therefore, those cruel hindrances arising from affinity, spiritual or legal relationship, and consanguinity must give way, so far as the Scriptures permit, in which the second degree of consanguinity alone is prohibited. Thus it is written in Leviticus 18, in which chapter there are twelve persons a man is prohibited from marrying; namely, his mother, his mother-in-law, his full sister, his half-sister by either parent, his granddaughter, his father's or mother's sister, his daughter-in-law, his brother's wife, his wife's sister, his stepdaughter, and his uncle's wife. Here only the first degree of affinity and the second degree of consanguinity are forbidden; yet not without exception, as will appear on closer examination, for the brother's or sister's daughter, or the niece, is not included in the prohibition, although she is in the second degree. Therefore, if a marriage has been contracted outside of these degrees, it should by no means be annulled on account of the laws of men, since it is nowhere written in the Bible that any other degrees were prohibited by God. Marriage itself, as of divine institution, is incomparably superior to any laws; so that marriage should not. be annulled for the sake of the laws, rather should the laws be broken for the sake of marriage.

6.17 That nonsense about conpaternities, conmaternities, confraternities, consororities, and confilieties must therefore be altogether abolished, when a marriage has been contracted. What was it but the superstition of men that invented those spiritual relationships? If one may not marry the person one has baptised or stood sponsor for, what right has any Christian to marry any other Christian? Is the relationship that grows out of the external rite, or the sign, of the sacrament more intimate that that which grows out of the blessing of the sacrament itself? Is not a Christian man brother to a Christian woman, and is not she his sister? Is not a baptised man the spiritual brother of a baptised woman? How foolish we are! If a man instruct his wife in the Gospel and in faith in Christ and thus become truly her father in Christ, would it not be right for her to remain his wife? Would not Paul have had the right to marry a maiden out of the Corinthian congregation, of whom he boasts that he has begotten them all in Christ? (1 Corinthians 4:15) See, thus has Christian liberty been suppressed through the blindness of human superstition.

6.18 There is even less in the legal relationship, and yet they have set it above the divine right of marriage. Nor would I recognize that hindrance which they term "disparity of religion," and which forbids one to marry any unbaptised person, even on condition that she become converted to the faith. Who made this prohibition? God or man? Who gave to men the power to prohibit such a marriage? The spirits, forsooth, that speak lies in hypocrisy, as Paul says. (1 Timothy 4:1) Of them it must be said: "The wicked have told me fables; but not as your law." (Psalm 119:85) The heathen Patricius married the Christian Monica, the mother of St. Augustine; why should not the same be permitted nowadays? The same stupid, no, wicked cruelty is seen in "the hindrance of crime," – as when a man has married a woman with whom he had lived in adultery, or when he plotted to bring about the death of a woman's husband in order to be able to wed the widow. I pray you, from this comes this cruelty of man toward man, which even God never demanded? Do they pretend not to know that Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, was wed by David, a most saintly man, after the double crime of adultery and murder? If the divine law did this, what do these despotic men to their fellowservants?

6.19 Another hindrance is that which they call "the hindrance of a tie," – when a man is bound by being befaithfulnessed to another woman. Here they decide that, if he has had carnal knowledge of the second, the betrothal with the first becomes null and void. This I do not understand at all I hold that he who has befaithfulnessed himself to one woman belongs no longer to himself, and because of this fact, by the prohibition of the divine law, he belongs to the first, though he has not known her, even if he has known the second. For it was not in his power to give the latter what was no longer his own; he deceived her and actually committed adultery. But they regard the matter differently because they pay more heed to the carnal union than to the divine command, according to which the man, having pledged his faithfulness to the first, is bound to keep it for ever. For whoever would give anything must give of that which is his own. And God forbids a man to overreach or circumvent his brother in any matter. (1 Thessalonians 4:6) This prohibition must be kept, over and above all the traditions of all men. Therefore, the man in the above case cannot with a good conscience live in marriage with the second woman, and this hindrance should be completely overthrown. For if a monastic vow make a man to be no longer his own, why does not a promise, of betrothal given and received do the same? – since this is one of the precepts and fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), (Ephesians 5:9) while a monastic vow is of human invention. And if a wife may claim her husband despite the fact that he has taken a monastic vow, why may not a bride claim her betrothed, even though he has known another? But we said above that he who has pledged his faithfulness to a maiden ought not to take a monastic vow, but is in duty bound to keep faith with her, which faith he cannot break for any tradition of men, because it is commanded by God. Much more should the man here keep faith with his first bride, since he could not pledge his faithfulness to a second save with a lying heart, and therefore did not really pledge it, but deceived her, his neighbor, against God's command. Therefore, the "hindrance of error" enters in here, by which his marriage to the second woman is rendered null and void.

6.20 The "hindrance of ordination" also is a lying invention of men, especially since they rant that even a contracted marriage is annulled by it. Thus they constantly exalt their traditions above the commands of God. I do not indeed sit in judgment on the present state of the priestly order, but I observe that Paul charges a bishop to be the husband of one wife; (1 Timothy 3:2) hence no marriage of deacon, priest, bishop or any other order can be annulled – although it is true that Paul knew nothing of this species of priests, and of the orders that we have today. Perish those cursed human traditions, which have crept into the Church only to multiply perils, sins and evils! There exists, therefore, between a priest and his wife a true and indissoluble marriage, approved by the divine commandment. But what if wicked men in sheer despotism prohibit or annul it? So be it! Let it be wrong among men; it is nevertheless right before God, Whose command has to take precedence if it confticts with the commands of men.

6.21 An equally lying invention is that "hindrance of public decency," by which contracted marriages are annulled. I am incensed at that barefaced wickedness which is so ready to put asunder what God has joined together that one may well scent antichrist in it, for it opposes all that Christ has done and taught. What earthly reason is there for holding that no relative of a deceased husband, even to the fourth degree, may marry the latter's widow? That is not a judgment of public decency, but ignorance of public decency. Why was not this judgment of public decency found among the people of Israel, who were endowed with the best laws, the laws of God? (Deuteronomy 25:5) On the contrary, the next of kin was even compelled by the law of God to marry the widow of his relative. Must the people of Christian liberty be burdened with severer laws than the people of legal bondage? But, to make an end of these figments, rather than hindrances – thus far there seem to me to be no hindrances that may justly annul a contracted marriage save these: impotence of the husband, ignorance of a previously contracted marriage, and a vow of chastity. Still, concerning the last, I am to this. day so far from certain that I do not know at what age such a vow is to be regarded as binding; as I also said above in discussing the sacrament of baptism. Thus you may learn, from this one question of marriage, how wretchedly and desperately all the activities of the Church have been confused, hindered, ensnared, and subjected to danger through the pestilent, ignorant and wicked traditions of men, so that there is no hope of betterment unless, we abolish at one stroke all the laws of all men, restore the Gospel of liberty, and by it judge and rule all things. Amen.

6.22 We have to speak, then, of sexual impotence, that we may the more readily advise the souls that are in peril. But first I wish to state that what I have said of hindrances is intended to apply after a marriage has been contracted; no marriage should be annulled by any such hindrance. But as to marriages which are to be contracted, I would briefly repeat what I said above. Under the stress of youthful passion or of any other necessity for which the pope grants dispensation, any brother may grant a dispensation to another or even to himself, and following that counsel snatch his wife out of the power of the tyrannical laws as best he can. For with what right am I deprived of my liberty by another's superstition and ignorance? If the pope grants a dispensation, for money, why should not I, for my soul's salvation, grant a dispensation to myself or to my brother? Does the pope set up laws? Let him set them up for himself, and keep hands off my liberty; else I will take it by stealth!

6.23 Now let us discuss the matter of impotence.

6.24 Take the following case. A woman, wed to an impotent man, is unable to prove her husband's impotence before court, or perhaps she is unwilling to do so with the mass of evidence and all the notoriety which the law demands; yet she is desirous of having children or is unable to remain continent. Now suppose I had counseled her to demand a divorce from her husband in order to marry another, satisfied that her own and her husband's conscience and their experience were ample testimony of his impotence; but the husband refused his consent to this. Then suppose I should further counsel her, with the consent of the man (who is not really her husband, but merely a dweller under the same roof with her), to give herself to another, say her husband's brother, but to keep this marriage secret and to ascribe the children to the so-called putative father. The question is: Is such a woman in a saved state? I answer, Certainly. Because in this case the error and ignorance of the man's impotence are a hindrance to the marriage; the tyranny of the laws permits no divorce; the woman is free through the divine law, and cannot be compelled to remain, continent. Therefore the man ought to yield her this right, and let another man have her as wife whom he has only in outward appearance.

6.25 Moreover, if the man will not give his consent, or agree to this division – rather than allow the woman to burn or to commit adultery, I should counsel her to contract a marriage with another and flee to distant parts unknown. What other counsel could be given to one constantly in danger from lust? Now I know that some are troubled by the fact that then the children of this secret marriage are not the rightful heirs of their putative father. But if it was done with the consent of the husband, then the children will be the rightful heirs. If, however, it was done without his knowledge or against his will, then let unbiased Christian reason, no, let Christian charity, decide which of the two has done the greater injury to the other. The wife alienates the inheritance, but the husband has deceived his wife and is completely defrauding her of her body and her life. Is not the sin of the man who wastes his wife's body and life a greater sin than that of the woman who merely alienates the temporal goods of her husband? Let him, therefore, agree to a divorce, or else be satisfied with strange heirs; for by his own fault he deceived the innocence of a maiden and defrauded her of the proper use of her body, besides giving her a wellnigh irresistible opportunity to commit adultery. Let both be weighed in the same scales. Certainly, by every right, deceit should fall back on the deceiver, and whoever has done an injury must make it good. What is the difference between such a husband and the man who holds another's wife captive together with her husband? Is not such a tyrant compelled to support wife and children and husband, or else to set them free? Why should not the same hold here? Therefore I maintain that the man should be compelled either to submit to a divorce or to support the other man's child as his heir. Doubtless this would be the judgment of charity. In that case, the impotent man, who is not really the husband, should support the heirs of his wife in the same spirit in which he would at great cost wait on his wife if she fell sick or suffered some other ill; for it is by his fault and not by his wife's that she suffers this ill. This have I set forth to the best of my ability, for the strengthening of anxious consciences, being desirous to bring my afflicted brethren in this captivity what little comfort I can.

6.26 As to divorce, it is still a moot question whether it be allowable. For my part I so greatly detest divorce that I should prefer bigamy to it, but whether it be allowable, I do not venture to decide. Christ Himself, the Chief Pastor, says in Matthew 5:32, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, Matthew excepting for the cause of fornication, maketh her commit adultery; and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery." Christ, then, permits divorce, but for the cause of fornication only. The pope must, therefore, be in error whenever he grants a divorce for any other cause, and no one should feel safe who has obtained a dispensation by this temerity (not authority) of the pope. Yet it is a still greater wonder to me, why they compel a man to remain, unmarried after bring separated from his wife, and why they will not permit him to remarry. For if Christ pennies divorce for the cause, of fornication and compels no one to remain unmarried, and if Paul would rather have one marry than burn, (1 Corinthians 7:9) then He certainly seems to permit a man to marry another woman in the stead of the one who has been put away. Would to God this matter were thoroughly threshed out and derided, so that counsel might be given in the infinite perils of those who, without any fault of their own, are nowadays compelled to remain unmarried, that is, of those whose wives or husbands have run away and deserted them, to come back perhaps after ten years, perhaps never. This matter troubles and distresses me; I meet cases of it every day, whether it happen by the special malice of Satan or because of our neglect of the word of God.

6.27 I, indeed, who, alone against all, can decide nothing in this matter, would yet greatly desire at least the passage in 1 Corinthians 7 to be applied here – "But if the unbeliever depart, let him depart. For a brother or sister is not under servitude in such cases." Here the Apostle gives permission to put away the unbeliever who departs and to set the believing spouse free to marry again. Why should not the same hold true when a believer – that is, a believer in name, but in truth as much an unbeliever as the one Paul speaks of – deserts his wife, especially if he never intends to return? I certainly can see no difference between the two. But I believe that if in the Apostle's day an unbelieving deserter had returned and had become a believer or had promised to live again with his believing wife, he would not have been taken back, but he too would have been given the right to marry again. Nevertheless, in these matters I decide nothing, as I have said, although there is nothing I would rather see decided, since nothing at present more grievously perplexes me and many more with me. I would have nothing decided here on the mere authority of the pope or the bishops; but if two learned and pious men agreed in the name of Christ (Matthew 18:19 f.) and published their opinion in the spirit of Christ, I should prefer their judgment even to such councils as are nowadays assembled, famous only for numbers and authority, not for scholarship and saintliness. Herewith I hang up my harp, until another and a better man shall take up this matter with me. (Psalm 137:2).

ORDINATION

7.1 Of this sacrament the Church of Christ knows nothing; it is an invention of the pope's church. Not only is there nowhere any promise of grace attached to it, but there is not the least mention of it in the whole New Testament. Now it is ridiculous to put forth as a sacrament of God that which cannot be proved to have been instituted by God. I do not hold that this rite, which has been observed for so many centuries, should be condemned; but in sacred things I am opposed to the invention of human fictions, nor is it right to give out as divinely instituted what was not divinely instituted, lest we become a laughing-stock to our opponents. We ought to see to it that every article of faith of which we boast be certain, pure, and based on clear passages of Scripture. But that we are utterly unable to do in the case of the sacrament under consideration.

7.2 The Church has no power to make new divine promises, as some rant, who hold that what is decreed by the Church is of no less authority than what is decreed by God, since the Church is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But the Church owes its life to the word of promise through faith, and is nourished and preserved by this same word. That is to say, the promises of God make the Church, not the Church the promise of God. For the Word of God is incomparably superior to the Church, and in this Word the Church, being a creature, has nothing to decree, ordain or make, but only to be decreed, ordained and made. For who begets his own parent? Who first brings forth his own maker? This one thing indeed the Church can do – it can distinguish the Word of God from the words of men; as Augustine confesses that he believed the Gospel, moved thereto by the authority of the Church, which proclaimed, this is the Gospel.

7.3 Not that the Church is, therefore, above the Gospel; if that were true, she would also be above God, in whom we believe because she proclaims that He is God. But, as Augustine elsewhere says, the truth itself lays hold on the soul and thus renders it able to judge most certainly of all things; but the truth it cannot judge, but is forced to say with unerring certainty that it is the truth. For example, our reason declares with unerring certainty that three and seven are ten, and yet it cannot give a reason why this is true, although it cannot deny that it is true; it is taken captive by the truth and does not so much judge the truth as it is judged by the truth. Thus it is also with the mind of the Church, when under the enlightenment of the Spirit she judges and approves doctrines; she is unable to prove it, and yet is most certain of having it. (1 Corinthians 2:16) For as in philosophy no one judges general conceptions, but all are judged by them, so it is in the Church with the mind of the Spirit, that judges all things and is judged by none, as the Apostle says. (1 Corinthians 2:15) But of this another time.

7.3 Let this then stand fast – the Church can give no promises of grace; that is the work of God alone. Therefore she cannot institute a sacrament. But even if she could, it yet would not follow that ordination is a sacrament. For who knows which is the Church that has the Spirit? since when such decisions are made there are usually only a few bishops or scholars present; it is possible that these may not be really of the Church, and that all may err, as councils have repeatedly erred, particularly the Council of Constance, which fell into the most wicked error of all. Only that which has the approval of the Church universal, and not of the Roman church alone, rests on a trustworthy foundation. I therefore admit that ordination is a certain churchly rite, on a par with many others introduced by the Church Fathers, such as the blessing of vases, houses, vestments, water, salt, candles, herbs, wine, and the like. No one calls any of these a sacrament, nor is there in them any promise. In the same manner, to anoint a man's hands with oil, or to shave his head, and the like, is not to administer a sacrament, since there is no promise given to those things; he is simply prepared, like a vessel or an instrument, for a certain work.

7.4 But you will reply: "What do you say to Dionysius, who in his Ecclesiastical Hierarchy enumerates six sacraments, among which he also includes orders?" I answer: I am well aware that this is the one writer of antiquity who is cited in support of the seven sacraments, although he omits marriage and thus has only six. We read simply nothing about these "sacraments" in the other Fathers, nor do they ever refer to them as sacraments; for the invention of sacraments is of recent date. Indeed, to speak more boldly, the setting so great store by this Dionysius, whoever he may have been, greatly displeases me, for there is scarce a line of sound scholarship in him. I ask you, by what authority and with what reasons does he establish his assortment of arguments about the angels, in his Celestial Hierarchy? – a book over which many curious and superstitious spirits have cudgeled their brains. If one were to read and judge fairly, is not all Shaken out of his sleeve and very like a dream? But in his Mystic Theology, which certain most ignorant theologians greatly puff, he is downright dangerous, being more of a Platonist than a Christian; so that, if I had my way, no believing mind would give the least attention to these books. So far from learning Christ in them, you will lose even what you know of Him. I know whereof I speak. Let us rather hear Paul, that we may learn Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:2) He is the way, the life and the truth; He is the ladder by which we come to the Father, as He said: "No man cometh to the Father but by me." (John 14:6)

7.5 And in the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, what does this Dionysius do but describe certain churchly rites and play round them with his allegories without proving them? just as among us the author of the book entitled Rationale divinorum. Such allegorical studies are the work of idle men. do you think I should find it difficult to play with allegories round anything in creation? Did not Bonaventure by allegory draw the liberal arts into theology? And Gerson even converted the smaller Donatus into a mystic theologian. It would not be a difficult task for me to compose a better hierarchy than that of Dionysius, for he knew nothing of pope, cardinals and archbishops, and put the bishop at the top. no, who has so weak a mind as not to be able to launch into allegories? I would not have a theologian give himself to allegorizing until he has perfected himself in the grammatical and literal interpretation of the Scriptures; otherwise his theology will bring him into danger, as Origen discovered.

7.6 Therefore a thing does not need to be a sacrament simply because Dionysius describes it. Otherwise, why not also make a sacrament of the processions, which he describes in his book, and which continue to this day? There will then be as many sacraments as there have been rites and ceremonies multiplied in the Church. Standing on so unsteady a foundation, they have nevertheless invented "characters" which they attribute to this sacrament of theirs and which are indelibly impressed on those who are ordained. from this do such ideas come? By what authority, with what reasons, are they established? We do not object to their being free to invent, say and give out whatever they please; but we also insist on our liberty and demand that they shall not arrogate to themselves the right to turn their ideas into articles of faith, as they have hitherto presumed to do. It is enough that we accommodate ourselves to their rites and ceremonies for the sake of peace; but we refuse to be bound by such things as though they were necessary to salvation, when they are not. Let them put by their despotic demands, and we shall yield free obedience to their opinions, and thus live at peace with them. It is a shameful and wicked slavery for a Christian man, who is free, to be subject to any but heavenly and divine traditions.

7.7 We come now to their strongest argument. It is this: Christ said at the Last Supper: "Do this in remembrance of me." (1 Corinthians 11:24) Here, they say, Christ ordained the apostles to the priesthood. From this passage they also concluded, among other things, that both kinds are to be administered to the priests alone. In fine, they have drawn out of this passage whatever they pleased, as men who might arrogate to themselves the free will to prove anything whatever from any words of Christ, no matter where found. But is that interpreting the words of God? Pray, answer me! Christ gives us no promise here, but only commands that this be done in remembrance of Him. Why do they not conclude that He also ordained priests when He laid upon them the office of the Word and of baptism, saying, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, baptising them in the name," etc.? (Mark 16:15) (Matthew 28:19) For it is the proper duty of priests to preach and to baptise. Or, since it is nowadays the chief and, as they say, indispensable duty of priests to read the canonical hours, why have they not discovered the sacrament of ordination in those passages in which Christ, in many places and particularly in the garden, commanded them to pray that they might not enter into temptation? (Matthew 26:41) But perhaps they will evade this argument by saying that it is not commanded to pray; it is enough to read the canonical hours. Then it follows that this priestly work can be proved nowhere in the Scriptures, and thus their praying priesthood is not of God, as, indeed, it is not.

7.8 But which of the ancient Fathers claimed that in this passage priests were ordained? from this comes this novel interpretation? I will tell you. They have sought by this device to set up a nursery of implacable discord, whereby clerics and laymen should be separated from each other farther than heaven from earth, to the incredible injury of the grace of baptism and the confusion of our fellowship in the Gospel. Here, indeed, are the roots of that detestable tyranny of the clergy over the laity; trusting in the external anointing by which their hands are consecrated, in the tonsure and in vestments, they not only exalt themselves above lay Christians, who are only anointed with the Holy Spirit, but regard them almost as dogs and unworthy to be included with them in the Church. Hence they are bold to demand, to exact, to threaten, to urge, to oppress, as much as they please. In short, the sacrament of ordination has been and is a most approved device for the establishing of all the horrible things that have been wrought hitherto and will yet be wrought in the Church. Here Christian brotherhood has perished, here shepherds have been turned into wolves, servants into tyrants, churchmen into worse than worldlings.

7.9 If they were forced to grant that as many of us as have been baptised are all priests without distinction, as indeed we are, and that to them was committed the ministry only, yet with our consent, they would presently learn that they have no right to rule over us except in so far as we freely concede it. For thus it is written in 1 Peter 2:9, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, and a priestly kingdom." Therefore we are all priests, as many of us as are Christians. But the priests, as we call them, are ministers chosen from among us, who do all that they do in our name. And the priesthood is nothing but a ministry, as we learn from 1 Corinthians 4:1, "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God."

7.10 It follows from this that whoever does not preach the Word, called by the Church to this very thing, is no priest at all. And further, that the sacrament of ordination can be nothing else than a certain rite of choosing preachers in the Church. For thus is a priest defined in Malachi 2:7, "The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth: because he is the angel of the Lord of hosts" You may be certain, then, that whoever is not an angel of the Lord of hosts, or whoever is called to anything else than such angelic service – if I may so term it – is never a priest; as Hosea says, "Because you hast rejected knowledge, I will reject you, that you shall not do the office of priesthood to me." (Hosea 4:6) They are also called pastors because they are to pasture, that is, to teach. Therefore, they who are ordained only to read the canonical hours and to offer masses are indeed papist, but not Christian, priests, because they not only do not preach, but are not called to preach; no, it comes to this, that such a priesthood is a different estate altogether from the office of preaching. Thus they are hour-priests and mass-priests, that is, a sort of living idol, having the name of priest, while they are in reality such priests as Jeroboam ordained, in Bethaven, of the off-scouring of the people, and not of the tribe of Levi. (1 Kings 12:31)

7.11 See, whither has the glory of the Church departed! The whole earth is filled with priests, bishops, cardinals and clerics, and yet not one of them preaches by virtue of his office, unless he be called to do so by another and a different call besides his sacramental ordination. Every one thinks he is doing full justice to his sacrament by mumbling the vain repetitions of his prescribed prayers and by celebrating masses; moreover, by never really praying those hours, or if he does pray them, by praying them for himself, and by offering his masses as a sacrifice – which is the height of perversity! – while the mass consists in the use of the sacrament. It is clear, therefore, that the ordination which, as a sacrament, makes clerics of this sort of men, is in truth nothing but a mere fiction, devised by men who understand nothing about the Church, the priesthood, the ministry of the Word, or the sacraments. And as is the sacrament, so are the priests it makes. To such errors and such blindness has come a still worse captivity; in order to separate themselves still farther from other Christians, whom they deem profane, they have unmanned themselves, like the priests of Cybele, and taken upon them the burden of a pretended celibacy.

7.12 It was not enough for this hypocrisy and error to forbid bigamy, viz., the having of two wives at the same time, as it was forbidden in the law, and as is the accepted meaning of the term; but they have called it bigamy if a man married two virgins, one after the other, or if he married a widow. no, so holly is the holiness of this most holy sacrament, that no married man can become a priest as long as his wife lives. And – here we reach the very summit of holiness – even, he is prevented from entering the priesthood, who without his knowledge or by an unfortunate chance married a fallen woman. But if one have defiled a thousand harlots, or ravished countless matrons and virgins, or even kept numerous Ganymedes, that would be no hindrance to his becoming bishop or cardinal or pope. Moreover, the Apostle's word, "the husband of one wife," (1 Timothy 3:2) must be interpreted to mean, "the prelate of one church," and this has given rise to the incompatible benefices." At the same time the pope, that munificent dispenser, may join to one man three, twenty, one hundred wives – I should say churches – if he be bribed with money or power – I should say, moved by godly charity and constrained by the care of the churches.

7.13 O pontiffs worthy of this holy sacrament of ordination! O princes, not of the catholic churches, but of the synagogues, no, the black dens, of Satan! (Revelation 2:9) I would cry out with Isaiah: (Isaiah 28:14) "Ye scornful men, who rule over my people that is in Jerusalem"; and with Amos: (Amos 6:1) "Woe to you that are wealthy in Sion, and to you that have confidence in the mountain of Samaria: ye great men, heads of the people, that go in with state into the house of Israel." O the reproach that such monstrous priests bring upon the Church of God! Where are there any bishops or priests who know the Gospel, not to speak of preaching it? Why then do they boast of being priests? Why do they desire to be regarded as holier and better and mightier than other Christians, who are merely laymen? To read the hours – what unlearned men, or, as the Apostle says, what men speaking with tongues, cannot do that? (1 Corinthians 14:23) But to pray the hours – that belongs to monks, hermits, and men in private life, all of them laymen. he duty of the priest is to preach, and if he does not preach he is as much a priest as a painted man is a man. Does ordaining such babbling priests make one a bishop? Or blessing churches and bells? Or confirming boys? Certainly not. Any> deacon or layman could do as much. The ministry of the Word makes the priest and the bishop.

7.14 Therefore my advice is: Flee, all ye that would live in safety; begone, young men, and do not enter upon this holy estate, unless you are determined to preach the Gospel, and are able to believe that you are not made one whit better than the laity through this sacrament of ordination! For to read the hours is nothing, and to offer mass is to receive the sacrament. What then is there left to you that every layman does not have? Tonsure and vestments? A sorry priest, forsooth, who consists of tonsure and vestment! Or the oil poured on your fingers? But every Christian is anointed and sanctified with the oil of the Holy Spirit, both in body and soul, and in ancient times touched the sacrament with his hands no less than the priests do now. But today our superstition counts it a great crime if the laity touch either the bare chalice or the corporale; not even a nun who is a pure virgin would be permitted to wash the palls and sacred linens of the altar. O God! how the sacrosanct sanctity of this sacrament of ordination has grown and grown. I anticipate that ere long the laity will not be permitted to touch the altar except when they offer their money. I can scarce, contain myself when I contemplate the wicked tyrannies of these desperate men, who with their farcical and childish fancies mock and overthrow the liberty and the glory of the Christian religion.

7.15 Let every one, therefore, who knows himself to be a Christian be assured of this, and apply it to himself – that we are all priests, and there is no difference between, us; that is to say, we have the same power in respect to the Word and all the sacraments. (Ordination, the Rite of Choosing Preachers) However, no one may make use of this power except by the consent of the community or by the call of a superior. For what is the common property of all, no individual may arrogate to himself, unless he be called. And therefore this sacrament of ordination, if it have any meaning at all, is nothing else than a certain rite whereby one is called to the ministry of the Church. Furthermore, the priesthood is property nothing but the ministry of the Word, mark you, of the Word – not of the law, but of the> Gospel. And the diaconate is not the ministry of reading the Gospel or the Epistle, as is the present practice, but the ministry of distributing the Church's alms to the poor, so that the priests may be relieved of the burden of temporal matters and may give themselves more freely to prayer and the Word. For this was the purpose of the institution of the diaconate, as we read in Acts 6:4. Whoever, therefore, does not know or preach the Gospel, is not only not a priest or bishop, but he is a plague of the Church, who under the false title of priest or bishop – in sheep's clothing, forsooth – oppresses the Gospel and plays the wolf in the Church.

7.16 Therefore, unless those priests and bishops with whom the Church is now filled work out their salvation, in some other way, that is, realize that they are not priests or bishops and bemoan the fact that they bear the name of an office whose duties they either do not know or cannot fulfil, and thus with prayers and tears lament their wretched hypocritical life – unless they do this, they are truly the people of eternal perdition, and the words of Isaiah are fulfilled in them: Isaiah 5 "Therefore is my people led away captive, because they had not knowledge, and their nobles have perished with famine, and their multitude were dried up with thirst. Therefore has hell enlarged her soul and opened her mouth without any bounds, and their strong ones, and their people, and their high and generous ones shall go down into it." What a dreadful word for our age, in which Christians are sucked down into so deep an abyss!

7.17 Since, therefore, what we call the priesthood is a ministry, so far as we can learn from the Scriptures, I cannot understand why one who has been made a priest cannot again become a layman; for the sole difference between him and a layman is his ministry. But to depose a man from the ministry is so far from impossible that it is even now the usual penalty imposed upon guilty priests; they are either suspended for a season or permanently deprived of their office. For that lying "indelible character" has long since become a laughing-stock. I admit that the pope imparts this character, but Christ knows nothing of it; and a priest who is consecrated with it becomes thereby the life-long servant and captive, not of Christ, but of the pope; as it is in our day. Moreover, unless I am greatly mistaken, if this sacrament and this lie fall, the papacy itself with its characters will scarcely survive; our joyous liberty will be restored to us; we shall realize that we are all equal by every right, and having cast off the yoke of tyranny, shall know that he who is a Christian has Christ, and that he who has Christ has all things that are Christ's and is able to do all things. (Philippians 4:13) Of this I will write more, and more tellingly, as soon as I perceive that the above has displeased my friends the papists.

THE SACRAMENT OF EXTREME UNCTION

8.1 To the rite of anointing the sick our theologians have made two additions which are worthy of them; first, they call it a sacrament, and secondly, they make it the last sacrament. So that it is now the sacrament of extreme unction, which may be administered only to such as are at the point of death. Being such subtle dialecticians, perchance they have done this in order to relate it to the first unction of baptism and the two succeeding unctions of confirmation and ordination. But here they are able to cast in my teeth, that in the case of this sacrament there are, on the authority of James the Apostle, both promise and sign, which, as I have all along maintained, constitute a sacrament. For does not James say: (James 5:14 f.) "Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." There, say they, you have the promise of the forgiveness of sins, and the sign of the oil.

8.2 But I reply: If ever there was a mad conceit, here is one indeed. I will say nothing of the fact that many assert with much probability that this Epistle is not by James the Apostle, nor worthy of an apostolic spirit, although, whoever be its author, it has come to be esteemed as authoritative. But even if the Apostle James did write it, I yet should say, no Apostle has the right on his own authority to institute a sacrament, that is, to give a divine promise with a sign attached; for this belongs to Christ alone. Thus Paul says that he received from the Lord the sacrament of the Eucharist, (1 Corinthians 11:23) and that he was not sent to baptise but to preach the Gospel. (1 Corinthians 1:17) And we read nowhere in the Gospel of this sacrament of extreme unction. But let us also waive that point. Let us examine the words of the Apostle, or whoever was the author of the Epistle, and we shall at once see how little heed these multipliers of sacraments have given to them.

8.3 In the first place, then, if they believe the Apostle's words to be true and binding, by what right do they change and contradict them? Why do they make an extreme and a particular kind of unction of that which the Apostle wished to be general? For he did not desire it to be an extreme unction or administered only to the dying; but he says quite generally: "If any man be sick" – not, "If any man be dying." I care not what learned discussions Dionysius has on this point in his Ecclesiastical Hierarchy; the Apostle's words are clear enough, on which words he as well as they rely, without, however, following them. It is evident, therefore, that they have arbitrarily and without any authority made a sacrament and an extreme unction out of the misunderstood words of the Apostle, to the detriment of all other sick persons, whom they have deprived of the benefit of the unction which the Apostle enjoined.

8.4 But what follows is still better. The Apostle's promise expressly declares that the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up. The Apostle commands us to anoint the sick man and to pray, in order that he may be healed and raised up; that is, that he may not die, and that it may not be an extreme unction. This is proved also by the prayers which are said, during the anointing, for the recovery of the one who is sick. But they say, on the contrary, that the unction must be administered to none but the dying; that is, that they may not be healed and raised up. If it were not so serious a matter, who could help laughing at this beautiful, apt and sound exposition of the Apostle's words? Is not the folly of the sophists, here shown in its true colors? As here, so in many other places, they affirm what the Scriptures deny, and deny what they affirm. Why should we not give thanks to these excellent magisters of ours? I therefore spoke truth when I said they never conceived a crazier notion than this?

8.5 Furthermore, if this unction is a sacrament it must necessarily be, as they say, an effective sign of that which it signifies and promises. Now it promises health and recovery to the sick, as the words plainly say: "The prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up." But who does not see that this promise is seldom if ever fulfilled? Scarce one in a thousand is restored to health, and when one is restored nobody believes that it came about through the sacrament, but through the working of nature or the medicine; for to the sacrament they ascribe the opposite power. What shall we say then? Either the Apostle lies in making this promise or else this unction is no sacrament. For the sacramental promise is certain; but this promise deceives in the majority of cases. Indeed – and here again we recognize the shrewdness and foresight of these theologians – for this very reason they would have it to be extreme unction, that the promise should not stand; in other words, that the sacrament should be no sacrament. For if it is extreme unction, it does not heal, but gives way to the disease; but if it heals, it cannot be extreme unction. Thus, by the interpretation of these magisters, James is shown to have contradicted himself, and to have instituted a sacrament in order not to institute one; for they must have an extreme unction just to make untrue what the Apostle intends, namely, the healing of the sick. If that is not madness, pray what is?

8.6 These people exemplify the word of the Apostle in 1 Timothy 1:7, "Desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither the things they say, nor whereof they affirm." Thus they read and follow all things without judgment. With the same thoughtlessness they have also found auricular confession in our Apostle's words – "Confess your sins one to another." (James 5:16) But they do not observe the command of the Apostle, that the priests of the church be called, and prayer be made for the sick. Scarce a single priestling is sent nowadays, although the Apostle would have many present, not because of the unction but of the prayer. Wherefore he says: "The prayer of faith shall save the sick man," etc. I have my doubts, however, whether he would have us understand priests when he says presbyters, that is, elders. For one who is an elder is not therefore a priest or minister; so that the suspicion is justified that the Apostle desired the older and graver men in the Church to visit the sick; these should perform a work of mercy and pray in faith and thus heal him. Still it cannot be denied that the ancient churches were ruled by elders, chosen for this purpose, without these ordinations and consecrations, solely on account of their age and their long experience.

8.7 Therefore, I take it, this unction is the same as that which the Apostles practiced, in Mark 6:13, "They anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them." It was a ceremony of the early Church, by which they wrought miracles on the sick, and which has long since ceased; even as Christ, in the last chapter of Mark, gave them that believe the power to take up serpents, to lay hands on the sick, etc. (Mark 16:17) It is a wonder that they have not made sacraments also of these things; for they have the same power and promise as the words of James. Therefore, this extreme – that is, this fictitious – unction is not a sacrament, but a counsel of James, which whoever will may use, and it is derived from Mark 6, as I have shown. I do not believe it was a counsel given to all sick persons, (Romans 5:3) for the Church's infirmity is her glory and death is gain; (Philippians 1:21) but it was given only to such as might bear their sickness impatiently and with little faith. These the Lord allowed to remain in the Church, in order that miracles and the power of faith might be manifest in them.

8.8 For this very contingency James provided with care and foresight by attaching the promise of healing and the forgiveness of sins not to the unction, but to the prayer of faith. For he says: "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." A sacrament does not demand prayer or faith on the part of the minister, since even a wicked person may baptise and consecrate without prayer; a, sacrament depends solely on the promise and institution of God, and requires faith on the part of him who receives it. But where is the prayer of faith in our present use of extreme unction? Who prays over the sick one in such faith as not to doubt that he will recover? Such a prayer of faith James here describes, of which he said in the beginning of his Epistle: (James 1:6) "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." And Christ says of it: "Whatsoever you ask, believe that you shall receive and it shall be done to you." (Mark 11:24)

8.9 If such prayer were made, even today, over a sick man – that is, prayer made in full faith by older, grave and saintly men – it is beyond all doubt that we could heal as many sick as we would. For what could not faith do? But we neglect, this faith, which the authority of the Apostle demands above all else. By presbyters – that is, men preeminent by reason of their age and their faith – we understand the common herd of priests. Moreover, we turn the daily or voluntary unction into an extreme unction, and finally, we not only do not effect the result promised by the Apostle, namely, the healing of the sick, but we make it of none effect by striving after the very opposite. And yet we boast that our sacrament, no, our figment, is established and proved by this saying of the Apostle, which is diametrically opposed to it. What theologians we are!

8.10 Now I do not condemn this our sacrament of extreme unction, but I firmly deny that it is what the Apostle James prescribes; for his unction agrees with ours neither in form, use, power nor purpose. Nevertheless; we shall number it among those sacraments which we have instituted, such as the blessing and sprinkling of salt and holy water. For we cannot deny that every creature is sanctified by the word and by prayer, (1 Timothy 4:4 f.) as the Apostle Paul teaches us. We do not deny, therefore, that forgiveness of sins and peace are granted through extreme unction; not because it is a sacrament divinely instituted, but because he who receives it believes that these blessings are granted to him. For the faith of the recipient does not err, however much the minister may err. For one who baptises or absolves in jest, that is, does not absolve so far as the minister is concerned, does yet truly absolve and baptise if the person he baptises or absolves believe. How much more will one who administers extreme unction confer peace, even though he does not really confer peace, so far as his ministry is concerned, since there is no sacrament there. The faith of the one anointed receives even that which the minister either could not or did not intend to give; it is sufficient for him to hear and believe the Word. For whatever we believe we shall receive, that we do really receive, it >matters not what the minister may do or not do, or whether he dissemble or jest. The saying of Christ stands fast – "All things are possible to him that believe," (Mark 9:23) and, "Be it to you even as you hast believed." (Matthew 8:13) But in treating the sacraments our sophists say nothing at all of this faith, but only babble with all their might of the virtues of the sacraments themselves – "ever learning, and never attaining to the knowledge of the truth." (2 Timothy 3:7)

8.11 Still it was a good thing that this unction was made extreme unction, for, thanks to that, it has been disturbed and subjected least of all the sacraments by tyranny and greed. This one last mercy, forsooth, has been left to the dying – they may freely be anointed, even without confession and communion. If it had remained a practice of daily occurrence, especially if it had conferred health on the sick, even without taking away sins, how many worlds would not the pontiffs have under their control today? For through the one sacrament of penance and through the power of the keys, as well as through the sacrament of ordination, they have become such mighty emperors and princes. But now it is a fortunate thing that they despise the prayer of faith, and therefore do not heal any sick, and that they have made for themselves, out of an ancient ceremony, a brand-new sacrament.

9.1 Let this suffice now for these four sacraments. I know how it will displease those who believe that the number and use of the sacraments are to be learned not from the sacred Scriptures, but from the Roman See. As though the Roman See had given those sacraments and had not rather got them from the lecture halls of the universities, to which it is unquestionably indebted for whatever it has. The papal despotism would not have attained its present position, had it not taken over so many things from the universities. For there was scarce another of the celebrated bishoprics that had so few learned pontiffs; only in violence, intrigue, and superstition has it hitherto surpassed the rest. For the men who occupied the Roman See a thousand years ago differ so vastly from those who have since come into power, that one is compelled to refuse the name of Roman pontiff either to the former or to the latter.

9.2 There are yet a few other things it might seem possible to regard as sacraments; namely, all those to which a divine promise has been given, such as prayer, the Word, and the cross. Christ promised, in many places, that those who pray should be heard; especially in Luke 11, where He invites us in many parables to pray. Of the Word He says: "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." (Luke 11.28) And who will tell how often He promises aid and glory to such as are afflicted, suffer, and are cast down? no, who will recount all the promises of God? The whole Scripture is concerned with provoking us to faith; now driving us with precepts and threats, now drawing us with promises and consolations. Indeed, whatever things are written are either precepts or promises; the precepts humble the proud with their demands, the promises exalt the humble with. their forgiveness.

9.3 Nevertheless, it has seemed best to restrict the name of sacrament to such promises as have signs attached to them. The remainder, not being bound to signs, are bare promises. Hence there are, strictly speaking, but two sacraments in the Church of God – baptism and bread; for only in these two do we find both the divinely instituted sign and the promise of forgiveness of sins. The sacrament of penance, which I added to these two, lacks the divinely instituted visible sign, and is, as I have said, nothing but a return to baptism. Nor can the scholastics say that their definition fits penance, for they too ascribe to the sacrament a visible sign, which is to impress upon the senses the form of that which it effects invisibly. But penance, or absolution, has no such sign; wherefore they are constrained by their own definition, either to admit that penance is not a sacrament, and thus to reduce the number of sacraments, or else to bring forward another definition.

9.4 Baptism, however, which we have applied to the whole of life, will truly be a sufficient substitute for all the sacraments we might need as long as we live. And the bread is truly the sacrament of the dying; for in it we commemorate the passing of Christ out of this world, that we may imitate Him. Thus we may apportion these two sacraments as follows: baptism belongs to the beginning and the entire course of life, the bread belongs to the end and to death. And the Christian should use them both as long as he is in this poor body, until, fully baptised and strengthened, he passes out of this world and is born to the new life of eternity, to eat with Christ in the Kingdom of His Father, as He promised at the Last Supper – "Amen I say to you, I will not drink from henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." (Matthew 26:29) Thus He seems clearly to have instituted the sacrament of the bread with a view to our entrance into the life to come. Then, when the meaning of both sacraments is fulfilled, baptism and bread will cease.

9.5 Herewith I conclude this prelude, and freely and gladly offer it to all pious souls who desire to know the genuine sense of the Scriptures and the proper use of the sacraments. For it is a gift of no mean importance, to know the things that are given us, as it is said in 1 Corinthians 2, and what use we ought to make of them. Endowed with this spiritual judgment, we shall not mistakenly rely on that which does not belong here. These two things our theologians never taught us, no, I think they took particular pains to conceal them from us. If I have not taught them, I certainly did not conceal them, and have given occasion to others to think out something better. It has at least been my endeavor to set forth these two things. Nevertheless, not all can do all things. To the godless, on the other hand, and those who in obstinate tyranny force on us their own teachings inas God's representative's, I confidently and freely oppose these pages, utterly indifferent to their senseless fury. Yet I wish even them a sound mind, and do not despise their efforts, but only distinguish them from such as are sound and truly Christian.

9.6 I hear a rumor of new bulls and papal curses sent out against me, in which I am urged to recant or be declared a heretic. If that is true, I desire this book to be a portion of the recantation I shall make; so that these tyrants may not complain of having had their pains for nothing. The remainder I will publish ere long, and it will, please Christ, be such as the Roman See has hitherto neither seen nor heard. I shall give ample proof of my obedience. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

9.7 Why doth that impious Herod fear
When told that Christ the King is near?
He takes not earthly realms away,
Who gives the realms that ne'er decay.

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